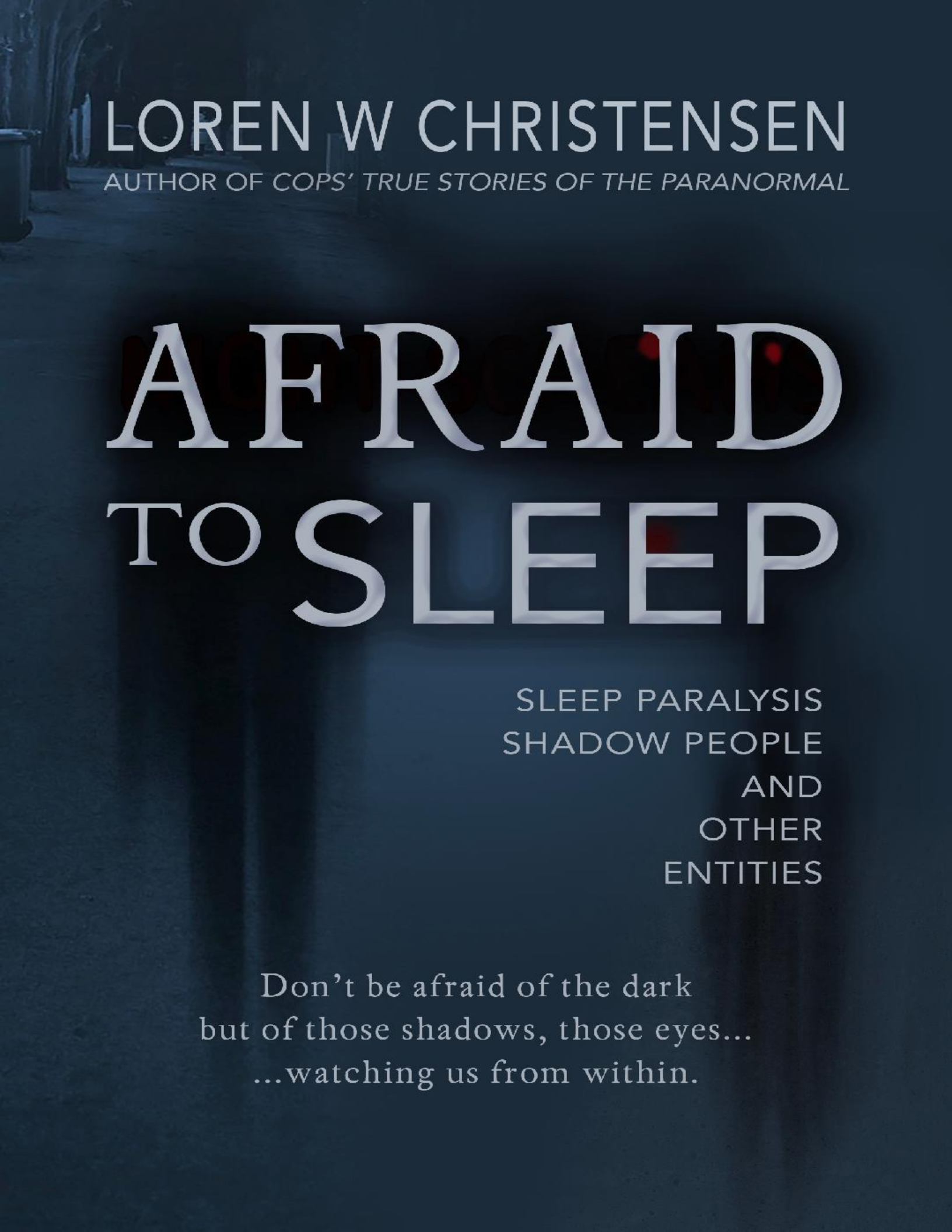
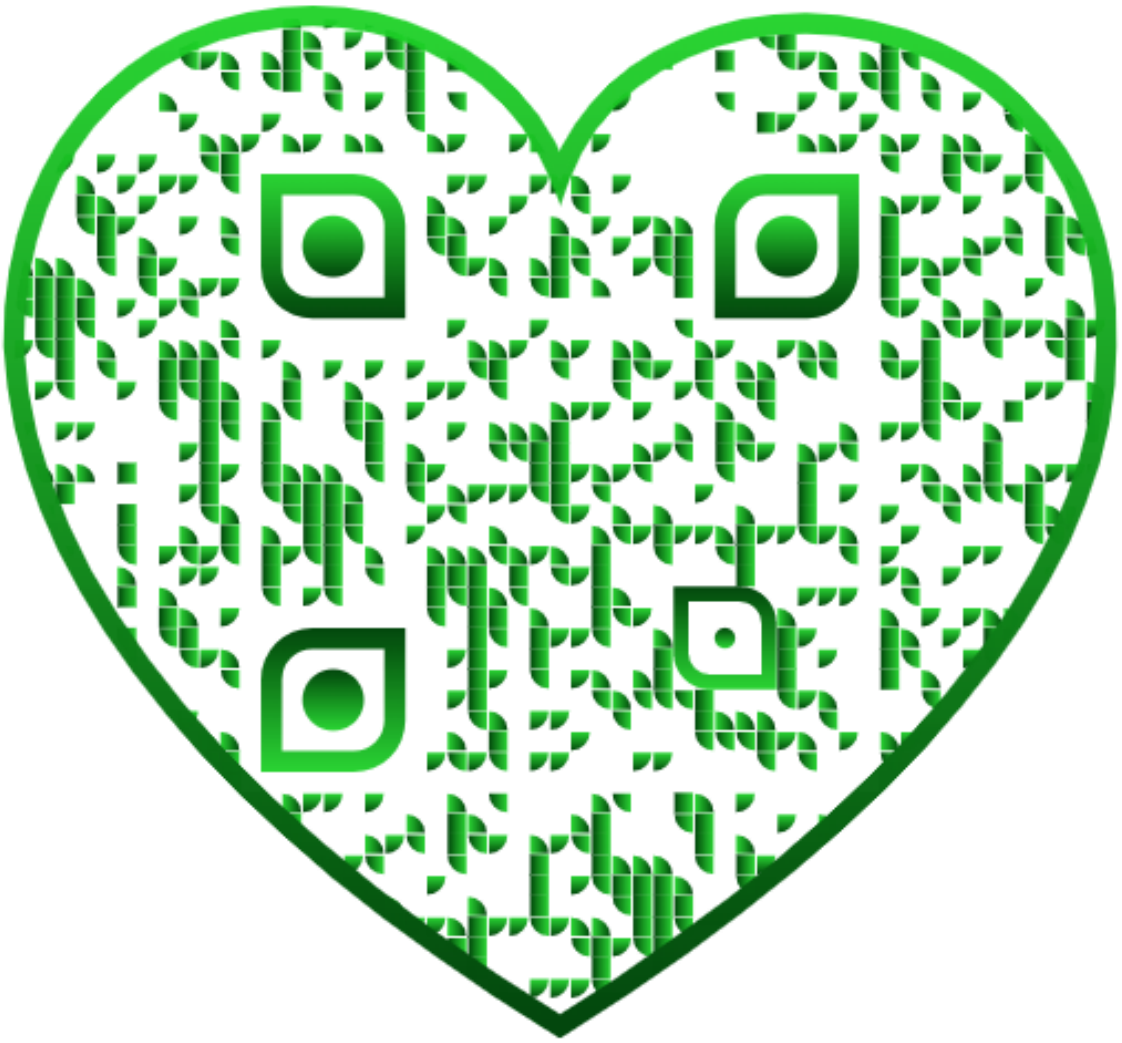

LOREN W CHRISTENSEN
AUTHOR OF COPS' TRUE STORIES OF THE PARANORMAL
AFRAID TO SLEEP
SLEEP PARALYSIS
SHADOW PEOPLE
AND
OTHER
ENTITIES
Don't be afraid of the dark
but of those shadows, those eyes...
...watching us from within.



AFRAID TO SLEEP
LOREN W. CHRISTENSEN

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“If a dream is just a dream, something that happens in your mind while you’re asleep, then that’s alright. It’s yours to take with you into the morning, and it fades away there in the light.

“But when the dreams start to come while you’re awake, and they come with the light, then that is not all right. What we look for then are other people who have dreamed what we’ve dreamed, who have seen what we’ve seen.

“When the dreams become real, sometimes the only comfort you can find is in knowing that you’re not alone.

~ From the television mini-series *Taken* (2002), produced by Steven Spielberg

Might it be true that we all are in Satan’s sandbox?

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Shadow man: Witnesses describe a shadow shaped like a human. Most people say the shape is male, or their sense of the entity is that it's male, and it's six to seven feet tall. The figure is often said to be blacker than their dark bedroom. Some have glowing orange or yellow eyes. Witnesses have reported that their flashlight beams didn't penetrate the figure. On rare occasions, people have seen white shadow people.

Hat man: Like the shadow man, the entity seems to be male, and wears a fedora hat or top hat. Sometimes, hat man appears to be wearing an overcoat or cape. Some also have glowing orange or yellow eyes.

Shadow entity: Witnesses say these don't have a specific shape. They appear as a shadow mass, often creeping across the floor or up a wall. Sometimes they are seen as a black mist.

Shadow animals: Witnesses report seeing shadow dogs, cats, rabbits, and even spiders. They appear briefly and then disappear.

Other entities: A minority of witnesses have reported seeing other entities during sleep paralysis, such as a scraggly, evil-appearing old woman, creatures with large eyes similar to alien greys, translucent figures, and creatures with wings.

Experiencer: A person who has had sleep paralysis and witnessed an entity.

INTRODUCTION

LET'S PROCEED CAREFULLY

I think we have to be careful about assigning labels based on assumptions. No one knows for sure about most things paranormal related, but that doesn't stop some people from claiming mastery of the subject. On one shadow people related website, I found it difficult to read the comments because I was rolling my eyes so much. Even the site moderator was repeatedly asking people to cool it with their claims of expertise on all things paranormal and others with their religious connections.

I found another site where its owner had spent considerable effort on its professional appearance. Often a rarity in the paranormal world, the writing was excellent, and the factual information about what happened was well presented. But the site owner had a never-ending list of absolutes about what he claimed was behind the incidents.

Keep in mind that as you read this book and other writings on the paranormal, there is what actually happened, and there is what people say about it. These are often two different things.

For example, let's say Sara awakens to find that she can't move. She is paralyzed. As she lay confused and frightened about what is going on, a shadow, shaped like a tall man, moves toward her along the side her bed. There are two facts here.

Sara couldn't move.
She saw a moving shadow entity.

What are not facts are the absolutes "experts" say about them. Such as:

"Shadow people stand next to your bed because they want to give you a message."
"Shadow people are scared of flashlights."
"Shadow people alter their appearance to frighten people."

“Shadow people are in a state of suffering.”
“You must get an exorcist now because shadow beings are demons.”
“Shadow creatures are actually beings from outer space.”
“Hat man is from another dimension.”

Sadly, there are many, many shadow people websites and social media pages where experts spread this kind of “truth” to the uninformed and frightened.

To those who are quick to pass on absolutes to others, please cite your source. Cite the studies that found your information to be true. Did someone sit down and have a chat over coffee with a shadow person? Or perhaps the “truth” was inscribed on stone tablets from the heavens.

Okay, that last sentence was sarcastic. But it bothers me to repeatedly see how these so-called informed people spread nonsense that misinforms and frightens others who are often traumatized by their experience.

Hopefully, someday we will know what shadow entities are. Until then, people claiming to be experts will fill in the blanks with data based on their guesswork, hearsay, religion, and theories.

I’m not saying these people are trying to deceive. They are likely good-hearted folks who believe what they say. Some are trying to help the frightened and confused. But when they speak in such absolutes, their “help” isn’t helpful and is likely to cause harm and more significant trepidation.

This is off target but allow me to throw it into the mix as an example of how well-meaning people can spread harmful and even dangerous information. I’ve been training and teaching martial arts since 1965. I began my writing life by penning articles in martial arts magazines and eventually books on the subject. While there are some wonderful people in the fighting arts, there are some who overflow with erroneous information and blanket statements. They say things like, “Hit a guy here, and he will die instantly.” “A bully will always attack this way.” “A knife fighter will always do this,” and so on.

The truth is that hitting “a guy here” might or might not kill him. Bullies don’t always “attack this way,” and knife fighters don’t “always do this.” The problem is instructors are teaching these blanket “truths” to students who believe them because the teachers supposedly have the

knowledge. The danger in spreading false and exaggerated information is that it can hurt people in dangerous self-defense situations.

This is my fourth book on things that go bump in the night. As a result, I have come across so many people who claim to know all about ghosts, spirits, and UFOs. They are quick to "inform" others with assertions that, in some cases, increases fear, physical illness, and a sense of helplessness. Additionally, some of their claims are so out there that it gives everyone interested in the paranormal a bad name.

My approach to the paranormal is to only report what happened. I do this in my books, when giving talks to groups, and when doing interviews. I have always done it this way, beginning with my first paranormal experience, UFOs.

Before my tour in Vietnam, I was stationed on a missile base on the edge of the Florida Everglades, working as a military police dog handler. For several weeks, we experienced multiple sightings of UFOs. One night, 20 others and I had a close encounter of the second kind.

When talking about this event in the years after, I have found that the best way to reduce criticism and eye-rolling among listeners is to state only the facts and nothing but the facts. I never claim that the craft's pilots were from Mars, nor have I said with absolute authority that they were demons from Hell. I have only shared what occurred and let the listeners come to their own conclusions.

Why do I do it this way? Because I don't know where the crafts came from, nor did the high-ranking officers who rushed to my base the morning after the close encounter and told us not to shoot at them, call home, and tell anyone. So when I talk or write about it, I don't make any claims based on my theories, beliefs, religious bent, or a desire to frighten the listeners.

Sometimes in presentations and interviews, I'm pressed to state my opinion on where I thought the UFOs came from. Often, the questioner asks this to further the conversation or stir debate. Case in point, I was recently on a UFO-related podcast to tell my story. Afterward, the interviewer asked my opinion on UFO incidents that have been in the news lately.

I understand it was a talk show on which people, well, talk. But I was just a witness, a terrified one, so my opinion was of no higher value than anyone else's. People who witness and experience the supernatural are not suddenly endowed with expertise on the subject.

But since I'm a nice guy <cough>, and I understand the concept of a talk show, I give the following when asked my opinion about my experience.

"I had been around a lot of aircraft at that point in my three-year stint in the Army. Never had I seen one remain motionless high over our heads in the night sky, then literally disappear when two jets from Homestead Air Force Base approached them.

"Never had our military aircraft that occasionally passed overhead, send our eight badass, man-chewing sentry dogs into a defecating frenzy, cower, and refuse to come out of their kennels.

"Never had one of our aircraft in the year that I had been in the Everglades caused a teaming jungle of a billion noisy creepy crawlies to suddenly become eerily silent for 15 minutes.

"Never had our aircraft sent a commanding officer over the edge of sanity." (He was taken away in a van never to be seen again on our base).

"Never had our aircraft flown behind a small cloud, remain there, and shined a beam of light down onto the ground."

These were all facts. Not conjecture.

Using this approach, I don't recall ever being challenged by even the most steadfast debunker. This is because it's difficult to debunk a fact. But conclusions, based on feelings, emotions, and religious beliefs can be discredited.

Sorry for the digression, but I think it's important to always keep an open mind when reading about the paranormal in books, on blogs, and on Facebook pages. Keep that same open mind when watching YouTube videos and those highly questionable "realistic" paranormal TV ghost hunter programs.

You will learn much more with an objective mind than you will with one already convinced. And when *experts* share what they *know* to be factual, just politely nod and know that theirs is only an opinion.

There are definitely *knowledgeable* people on the paranormal, those who have spent years investigating, studying, interviewing people, examining photos and videos, and researching. The ones I know are professional, experienced, informed, and their experiences are chilling and eye-opening.

But while they know the complexities of the investigative process, most know the difference between what happened and their opinions about

what it might mean.

Author's Note 1

I recently read a review of a book about shadow people complaining the author didn't take a side on the issue. In other words, the reader wanted the author to decide what the reader should think. I had a reviewer of my book *Cops' True Stories of the Paranormal,* complain about the same thing. "Christensen didn't say what he thought the paranormal activity was."

As I comment throughout this book, there are no experts on this stuff. If I were to write a book where I have strong feelings for or against shadow entities, it's likely the end product would be slanted toward my take on the subject.

When I write on the paranormal, I present what I find in my research, what I gather from experiencers, and what I have personally faced. Since I wasn't present during other people's occurrences, and I didn't witness all the nuances, I'm not in a position to debunk or claim Satan was involved.

With my experiences, I look for alternative explanations to what I have seen. But sometimes there just aren't any. I also devalue my emotions regarding an experience. The fact I got covered with goosebumps and my heart slammed into my throat are irrelevant to what unfolded. What is pertinent is what happened.

So as we proceed, I'll point out what scientists and psychologists say about some experiences, and I'll also point out where their explanations don't apply.

I hope my efforts have been objective. In this day and age of yellow journalism, I think this is the right way to do it.

Author's Note 2

Lastly, I want to give a big thanks to the many people who contributed to this text. Some used their real names, others didn't. They sent me their stories, I tweaked them a little for clarity, and returned them to the author for their approval. Once we had a finished product, their piece was inserted into the book.

Hopefully, getting their story off their chests will help them sleep in peace.

CHAPTER 1

FEAR VS. CREEPY

Creepy [kreepee] adj. creep-i-er, creep-i-est 1. causing an unpleasant feeling of unease.
Synonyms: spine-chilling, disturbing, eerie, sinister, ominous, freaky, nightmarish, ghostly

While creepy might be in the eye of the beholder, there are some sights and sounds that many people agree fit the definition. For example:

There is that sweaty, glassy-eyed man sitting low in his old pickup watching middle school girls play soccer.

There is that person wearing all black clothing walking a few yards behind you on a dark, empty street, stopping when you do, walking again when you do, turning when you do.

There is that man standing by a tree in the park watching children play.

There that coworker who never fails to give you a hungry up and down look as you walk past.

There is that *clunk* that awakens you at 3 a.m.

Creepy-Evil

I was afraid many times during my 29 years in law enforcement, but there were only a handful of encounters that I would describe as creepy-evil. One that comes immediately to mind is a 20-something man I interviewed in jail. Other officers had arrested him hours earlier for committing a racially motivated hate crime, arson.

I entered a room where the two of us were separated by a three-inch-thick plexiglass window. We talked on phones, our faces about 18 inches apart. He was a slight man, maybe 150 pounds, not unpleasant looking, calm with an air of confidence. However, his eyes defined the adage "windows to the soul," in his case, a soul that was dark, evil, and filled with hate.

My perception of him didn't change the entire time we talked.

His hate-motivated crime was certainly evil by definition, but I had arrested and interviewed many criminals who had done worse. But in this case, his evilness was something I felt radiating off his person, despite that thick plexiglass. Before any police critics accuse me of having an overactive imagination, they're wrong. I spent 29 years around criminals—murderers, rapists, child molesters, and so on—but only this guy exuded such a powerful sense of creepiness—evil creepiness.

I spent about 45 minutes with him, and every minute was discomforting. Not because he was a physical threat, because he wasn't. Even if we had been on the same side of that window, I wouldn't have felt any physical danger.

But it was that radiating aura of creepiness—those heartless, evil, obsidian eyes—that was so profound that the experience has stayed with me all these years.

Characteristics Of Creepiness

A short article in Sciencedirect.com titled "On the nature of creepiness," noted the following after an online survey of 1341 people:

- Males were perceived as being more likely to be creepy than females.
- Females were more likely to associate sexual threats with creepiness.
- Unpredictability was part of creepiness.
- Some occupations and hobbies were more linked to creepiness than others, such as an obese, unwashed, yellow-toothed man working in an adult video arcade.
- Creepy hobbies might include collecting strange dolls or collecting fingernails and toenails.

One suggestion was that creepiness is an emotional response to the uncertainty about a threat.

- Is that dark mass in the corner of the room a threat?
- Did my mattress just sink a little on my side?
- Was that a hand touching my hair?
- I just heard a whisper, and I'm alone.

While these can be terrifying, creepiness becomes a factor because there is an element of doubt about them. For example:

- What is happening?
- What is going to happen?
- Will I be harmed?
- Will I be carried off to some dark, dank place with no hope of ever escaping?

Contrast this with a thug stepping out from an alley, pointing a gun at you, and demanding your wallet. Scary? Yes? He has made his intention clear—he wants your money, and if you don't hand it to him, he just might shoot you. But creepy? Most wouldn't describe this experience with that word. Remember, creepy things are usually ambiguous, confusing, and unclear.

His gun and his finger on the trigger are quite clear.

Most of us consider our dark bedrooms a safe place. That is until we see or hear something out of the norm.

A thump.

A creak.

A whisper.

A chunk of darkness that suddenly moves.

Red eyes that don't blink.

These unknown and uncertain elements send an eruption of tingles up the spine and move the fine hairs on the back of our necks.

Can creepiness and startle-fear combine?

When I was a military policeman in Saigon, Vietnam, during the war, I had to pull guard duty for two weeks before being assigned street patrol in a vehicle. During my second week, I had to guard a closed military installation on a dark street from midnight until morning. The block was usually crazy busy during the day, but after the 1 a.m. curfew, there wasn't a passing vehicle or a single person anywhere. There was just darkness, a breeze that scattered debris along the street, and the ever-present rumble of artillery outside the city.

Being new, I was anxious. I was alone on the post, armed with a .45 caliber pistol and an M-16, but inexperienced and apprehensive that a sniper or an all-out invasion would end my short life.

Two hours into my duty, I heard a metallic rattle and a loud thump.

The noise came from the shadows across the street. I quickly crouched behind a cement-filled barrel and shouldered my M-16. My heart was thumping, my eyes were watering, and I could feel the fight or flight juices flooding my muscles. I was scared, but I was ready to send a burst of .223 rounds into the enemy.

Another thump and clatter from the dark shadows across the street, and again my heart banged into my throat.

Then the "threat" revealed itself.

A dog. A mangy street dog emerged from the dark, a wiggling rat the size of a Chihuahua in the mutt's clamped-shut mouth.

During those long seconds, I felt a combination of the creeps—fear of the unknown (the out of place sound and that something might happen at any moment), and fear of what was a certainty—I was in a war zone where the likelihood of an assault by the enemy was a constant threat and occurrence.

My mix of creepiness and fear was short-lived, but I still hope the rat gave the dog indigestion for making me go through that.

Fear generally means the cause is clear. For example, a 250-pound, tattooed weightlifter says he will remove your head from your shoulders for cutting him off in traffic.

Creepiness is when a different road rager—a skeletal man with an acne-splattered face, coke bottle glasses, and pant cuffs six inches short of his socks—gets out of his car and just stares at you without uttering a word, his wet-lipped grin exposing bad teeth.

In the first scenario, the man's appearance and verbal threat make it clear what is about to happen. In the second, it isn't clear at all, and it's made worse because he doesn't say anything to you. He isn't a physical threat like the big guy, but his peculiar look and demeanor, which many would describe as discomforting, places him into the creepy category.

Likewise, when you awaken at 2 a.m. in your bedroom's perceived safety to see movement in the dark where there shouldn't be, and you don't know what it means.

Why is it important to know the difference?

As we said earlier, knowledge is power. Paranormal means "beyond the normal" or, according to Merriam-Webster, "not scientifically explainable." Shadow entities certainly fall into this category, which includes the elements that define the word "creepy."

Knowing the difference between fear and creepiness, and how they can sometimes exist together, increase your understanding of your feelings and emotions.

For many people, this provides some degree of comfort.

A room in Portland, Oregon's Shanghai Tunnels, the subject of many paranormal television programs and referenced in Chapter 4, "An odd death." Creepy? Frightening? Both? Neither? More on fear and how to deal with it in Chapter 9.

CHAPTER 2

BELIEVING OR NOT BELIEVING IN THE PARANORMAL

The Inner Critic

Although I've written frequently about ghosts, spirits, UFOs, mediums, and other supernatural incidents in nonfiction and fiction, I'm never quick to call something paranormal just because it might look that way at first glance. While my mother passed down a certain amount of psychic ability, I'm always quick to analyze my personal experiences. Here are two recent examples of thinking analytically.

My wife and I recently watched a TV program in which a woman asked a man his name. Impulsively, I blurted, "Bartholomew," a second before the man answered with that very name. Whoa. As I mentioned, I inherited a little of my mother's psychic ability, but this time I shocked myself. Where did that come from? The TV program was present day, and I'm guessing the apostle's name has been out of favor for several centuries. So why did I think of it right then?

Then my inner critic spoke up.

Did I really say the name *before* the man answered on TV? Is it possible my brain did something at that exact moment, something that made me blur time? Did I somehow confuse *before* and *after?*

Almost as fast as I said Bartholomew, I was telling myself that my brain must have misfired. Why? Is thinking that my mind misfired more of a stretch than my having a psychic moment? Is coming up with the misfire as absurd as what UFO skeptics and debunkers come up with to denounce UFO sightings? You've probably heard them: swamp gas, kites, birds, drones, and weather balloons. Is it as absurd as when doubters tell sane, rational people that they couldn't have seen a shadow shaped like a man at the foot of their bed?

Consider these three thoughts (AKA: psychic moments, clairvoyant moments, knowing, shining) I had a couple of weeks later.

1) I awoke one morning thinking how fantastic it would be to get an email or call from someone wanting to make one of my fictions into a movie. Of course, every writer has that dream. But on that day, it was the first time I awoke with the seemingly random thought.
2) Later that morning, I took the dogs out to do their business, passing by two of our basement windows. I suddenly remembered a year and a half earlier when a carpenter said he had some spare security bars that he would mount outside the windows. He got busy with other customers, and it never happened.
3) Then, when I was having lunch (the same day), I remember I was supposed to get an Amazon gift card from a company that installed a new door for us. It had been several months since the promise.

I heard from all three that same day.

A guy I know, an occasional actor and screenwriting teacher, emailed and said he wanted to take notes on my short story series called *Old Ed*. He thought it would make a great script to present to Netflix. I was riding high on that when my carpenter friend called in the afternoon and asked if I remembered us talking about the security bars, and did I still want them. An hour after that, I got an email from the door company with the attached Amazon gift card.

I don't care who you are, that's an awesome day. And I was whistling the theme to the old *Twilight Zone* TV program all that evening.

Of course, my inner critic tried to debunk it, but there wasn't any way that part of my brain could do it. I doubt if even the most steadfast and annoying debunker could attribute my extrasensory thoughts to swamp gas, clouds, or a weather balloon. They were what they were.

Critics of Believers

A study published in *Skeptical Inquirer* magazine (2006) revealed that seniors and college grad students believed in the paranormal more than freshman students. Does this suggest that people with higher education tend to believe in ghosts, spirits, haunted locations, and shadow people more than those with less education? An earlier Gallup poll conducted in 2001,

found that younger Americans believe in the paranormal more than the older people who responded.

Some pundits argue that people want to believe in the paranormal, a subject that often points to life after death, because it gives comfort. People feel better, these writers say, when they know their loved ones are in a good place and that they too will someday be there with them.

Other skeptics say accepting people believe in spirits, ghosts, and UFOs because it's thrilling. Thinking that entities are watching us is exciting, chilling, and goosebumpy fun.

Believers argue that more and better technology continuously being added to the paranormal investigator's toolbelt show there is something there. We can now hear beings from "the other side" speak. We can ask them to activate lightboxes, encourage them to move things, and even to touch us—and they do.

For sure, the paranormal is a hodgepodge of debunkers, proof, questionable findings, adrenaline charging discoveries, disappointments, and solid evidence.

Why Some People Don't Believe

Most often, it's because they haven't had a paranormal experience. But watch a nonbeliever change their opinion quickly when they've had the tar scared out of them.

Other people might be influenced by their religion to not believe, and they wouldn't dare claim they have had an experience in front of their congregation. Some churches say the supernatural is either God or a demon; there is no middle ground. It's a big risk to argue otherwise if it's a strict church.

Some skeptics are rabid in their disbelief and will attack those who do. These nonbelievers feel superior, smarter than the rest of the crowd, and take delight in trying to shame those who have had experiences. I recently "unfriended" a long-time friend on Facebook who took pleasure in trying to make me feel bad because I've written about the paranormal. He is an attorney and enjoys flaunting his intellect on anyone who has a different opinion, whether it's regarding the paranormal, religion, or politics. It finally occurred to me one day after seeing him berate a friend of mine—why do I have this guy in my life?

But watch out when a nonbeliever has an experience. Suddenly, he's the expert and is quick to tell everyone about what happened. I like to relate this to smokers. "Blah, blah blah," says the smoker with a dismissive wave of his hand. "I'll never get cancer. My grandpappy smoked for ninety-five years and died when he fell into a woodchipper." But when the blah blah guy gets lung cancer, suddenly he is an expert speaking out to anyone and everyone against the evils of tobacco. It's the same way with nonbelievers of the paranormal.

Consider this quote. "There is no evidence of spirits and anything supernatural—at all." That is a quote from a skeptic. It doesn't matter who said it because it's been uttered by many people. They say this in total disregard to people around the world who have interacted with spirits using the new and improved tools now in use. Skeptics speak this way, ignoring people who have been physically harmed with visible wounds. Nonbelievers say this despite the video evidence of doors slamming, chairs sliding across floors when no one is in the room, objects flying off counters, cupboards, fireplace mantels, and walls.

Some people only believe in science and the axiom "If it cannot be measured and repeated, it doesn't exist." Okay, but how does one measure and repeat a UFO sighting? How does one test and measure dishes thrown across a room by an invisible force, or someone shoved down a set of stairs when there is no one behind them? How does one measure a bedroom shadow that suddenly takes a human shape and moves toward the just awakened sleeper?

You can't.

Or can you?

In the 1960s, Italian paranormal investigator Marcello Bacci used short-wave radio to contact the deceased through Direct Radio Voice. He conducted the session in front of a room full of witnesses, including several scientists from the London Society for Psychical Research.

Electronic engineers inspected his radio before it was placed inside a Faraday cage, an enclosure used to block electromagnetic fields, such as radio signals. The device was switched off, unplugged, and all tubes or valves were removed.

Bacci was able to contact several deceased people from the nearby town. Their voices, which came through the radio's speaker, were verified by relatives in the room.

In 2002, Italian professor Salvatore Mario Festa tried to expose Bacci as a fraud but couldn't. In his words, he couldn't find any "hanky-panky," and, in the end, he became a believer.

To conclude, of course, not every experience is supernatural. For example, there aren't just a few absurd paranormal investigation-type programs on the tube. Do some of them over-dramatize events? Yes. Are some findings a real stretch even for the hardcore believers? Yes.

Would these programs lose viewers if they showed several investigations in a row where not one incident occurred? Of course. Nothing happening isn't entertainment.

It's unfortunate when the emphasis in the paranormal world is more about the investigators than the supernatural. I was at a ghost hunting convention recently with the usual booths offering books, videos, T-shirts, and stuffed alien dolls. At one point, the normal crowd noise changed to excitement when 10 people strolled in like they owned the place, all wearing black, their T-shirts embroidered with the name of a well-known ghost hunting organization.

They actually walked in a column as they streamed around the large hall, nodding at "fans," pointing at people they recognized, and looking down their noses at others wearing T-shirts with unknown team names.

CHAPTER 3

STAGES OF SLEEP

Knowledge is power. The more you know about sleep, the better you understand yourself, your body, your mind, and where shadow entities fit in.

I remember watching a sleep expert on the old Johnny Carson talk show back in the 1980s. Johnny asked him something like, Why do we need to sleep? The good doctor said, and I paraphrase, As near as we can determine, we need to sleep because we get sleepy.

This got a big laugh from the crowd, but the takeaway was that in the 1980s, scientists didn't know why we needed it other than it was an anecdote to yawning and droopy eyelids. As I write this near the end of 2020, research continues to search for answers.

Scientists know that your brain uses sleep to wash away toxins built up while awake and to consolidate your memory. As you go through your day, your brain collects an amazing amount of data. The new information isn't immediately recorded; it needs to be processed and warehoused, which mostly happens while you sleep. During this critical time, information is moved from your short-term memory and sent to your long-term memory, a process called "consolidation." Scientists know you retain information and perform better on memory tasks with sufficient sleep.

Your body also needs quality sleep to restore and rejuvenate energy, to grow hard-working muscle, repair tissue, and synthesize hormones.

According to an article in *Time* magazine, August 17/August 24, 2020, "The National Institute of Health is currently funding a dozen new studies exploring how sleep [the lack of it] may impact dementia [negatively]."

Quality sleep helps with other functions, such as weight maintenance, healthy immunity, heart health, emotional well-being, energy conservation, and cellular restoration. The interested reader is encouraged to research more on the process.

A Necessity

You don't need people in white lab coats to tell you sleep restores your mind and body. When you don't get enough, your eyes feel as if they had been rolling over a sandy beach, your brain is out of sync, and everything seems to go wrong. As Shakespeare wrote in King Henry, IV:

O sleep, O gentle sleep
Nature's soft nurse

Many people claim that this next quote was written by Edgar Allan Poe. Not true. Nor was it penned by Shakespeare. For now, it shall remain anonymous. Too bad because it's so very relevant for a book on sleep paralysis and the paranormal.

Sleep, those little slices of death—Oh, how I loathe them.

Quality sleep allows your hard-working body to rest, recuperate, and replenish your energy store. A good night's sleep is one of the best ways for you to feel better physically, deal with life's stressors, solve nagging problems, and expedite recovery from illness.

Some people claim, even boast, that they don't need much sleep. But science tells us that poor or disruptive sleep can lead to all the negatives mentioned above, and more. According to the U.S. Highway Traffic Safety Administration, poor sleepers cause nearly 100,000 traffic accidents a year, including 1500 deaths and over 70,000 injuries.

Changes in the sleep cycles change as you age. For example, deep sleep declines, and light sleep increases, which means seniors are getting less recuperative rest. To make things worse, they are more easily awakened. For those who think seniors need less sleep, anyway, understand that there is no scientific proof of this.

There are exceptions—there always are. For example, my father "slept like a baby" all night, right up until he died at age 98. My mother slept terribly all her life, a trait she passed on to me.

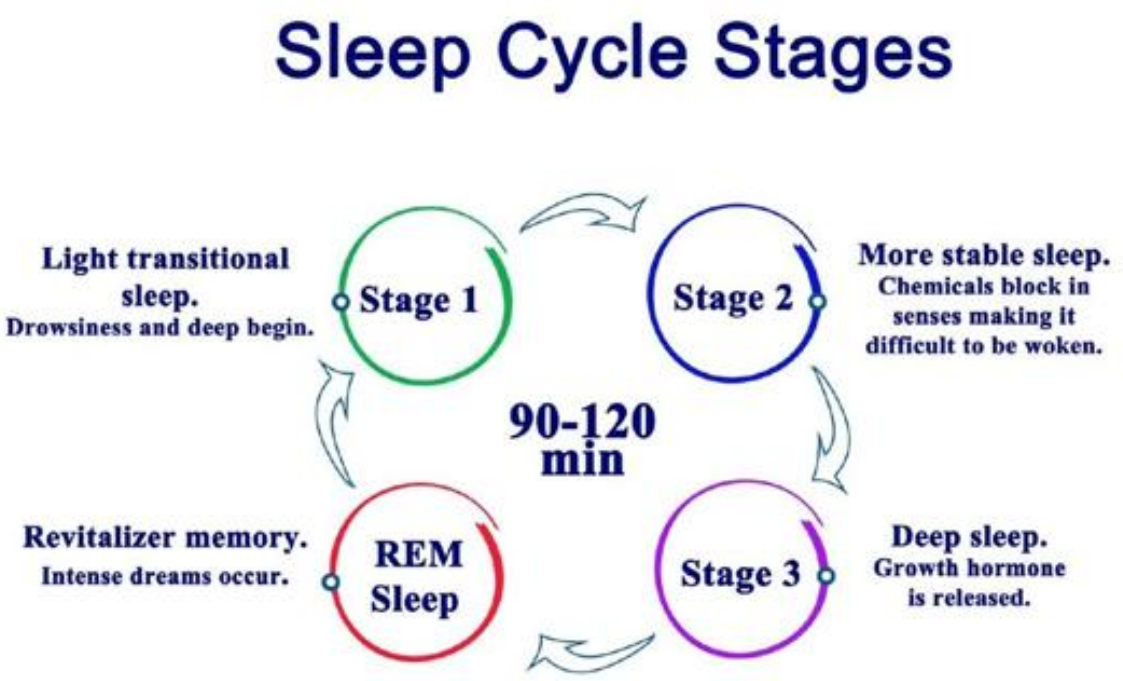
Some people are afraid to sleep. I know of many war veterans who dread going to bed for fear of suffering terrible nightmares of being back in the toxic environment of gunfire, explosions, bloody stench, and screams. Many nonveterans who have trouble sleeping for a variety of reasons

become anxious as they prepare for bed, knowing they are about to face another night of wakefulness.

Let's now look at where shadow entities fit in with this.

REM and NREM Sleep

Knowing your sleep cycle will broaden your understanding of sleep paralysis and those dark entities experienced upon awakening.



Some graphs show four stages of NREM sleep. But more and more experts are now using just three. The above sleep cycle repeats all night long.

NREM Sleep

Fast facts

- NREM means non-rapid eye movement.
- NREM happens first, followed by REM, rapid-eye-movement sleep.
- In NREM, your body heals, tissues regenerate, and you build bones and muscles. When you don't get enough NREM, you feel

fatigued, sluggish, and more susceptible to illness.

- About 80 percent of sleep occurs in NREM.
- Some sources use four stages, but three is the official categorization.
- Sleep deepens from Stage 1 to Stage 3.
- Most scientists agree that NREM sleep might be a state of body repair.

Stage 1 NREM: The lightest stage of sleep

NREM occurs in the first few minutes when you're drifting off to sleep. Your eyes are closed, or they might open and close a few times as you drift off. It's rare to dream in this stage, meaning it's possible, but for sure you might twitch, jerk, and experience a falling sensation. These are called hypnic jerks. Scientists don't know why they happen but say they are normal and harmless.

You can still wake up easily in this stage and have disrupted sleep (especially if you were watching TV when you drifted off). Some people (I'm married to one), can drift off and still follow a TV program for a few minutes. It's common for people in this stage to awaken and swear they hadn't fallen asleep. "I was just thinking of something," they often claim, insisting their eyes weren't closed.

People who say they didn't get a wink all night are probably in Stage 1, sleeping so lightly they are unaware.

There are many scientific terms to describe what is happening in this stage—beta and gamma brain waves, hertz frequency, and so on. The interested reader is encouraged to explore this further.

Stage 1 phase generally lasts for 5 to 10 minutes.

Stage 2 NREM: Slipping deeper into sleep

You've entered what some refer to as "proper sleep," in which your heart rate is slowing, and your body temperature drops. Your muscle activity decreases, and you're close to losing all conscious awareness of everything going on around you. If you hear something, it's unlikely you will comprehend what it is.

While Stage 2 is deeper than Stage 1, it's still considered a light sleep stage.

Stage 3 NREM: The deepest stage

You're enjoying the deep sleep stage. It can be hard to awaken you, and when you do wake up, you're likely to be a little, or a lot, disoriented for a brief period. Stage 3 is the deepest sleep your body enters during the night, and it takes up about 75 percent of your overall sleep time. It's often called "slow-wave" sleep because your brain waves slow to delta waves with the occasional faster ones.

Your breathing slows too and becomes more regular, rhythmic. Your body becomes still, and any eye movement ceases. You're less responsive to sounds coming from the outside world in Stage 3.

It's possible to dream in this stage, though they aren't as striking or memorable as they are in REM. People awakened in Stage 3—it's actually hard to wake them up—are usually groggy and disoriented. (Don't sign any legal documents or operate heavy machinery in this stage.)

Your body strengthens your immune system in Stage 3, it repairs and grows tissues, and builds bones and muscles exerted over the day.

Young kids might experience night terrors in this stage.

As you get older, you don't sleep as deeply as you did when you were younger. But here is Mother Nature's little joke. While you don't sleep as deeply and as long as you used to, experts say you still need it.

REM Sleep

Fast facts

- REM, rapid eye movement, is where sleep paralysis occurs.
- Sleep terrors can happen in REM. You appear to others to be awake, but you're actually asleep and experiencing profound panic. You might be hard to console.
- You have 3 to 5 REM periods each night.
- REM sleep ranges from 5 minutes to 60 minutes.
- In REM, our eyes move quickly and in different directions.
- REM sleep is shorter than NREM.
- Dreams usually occur in REM sleep.

- Scientists believe that in REM, your brain rejuvenates and rests. When you don't get enough REM sleep, you're irritable, easily confused, and despondent.
- Your brain in REM processes information from your day and prepares to store it in your long-term memory.
- Scientists can record your brain activity with an electroencephalograph (EEG) device. They know precisely when you're in REM and NREM stages.
- Your brain activity in the rapid eye movement stage is similar to when you're awake.
- Your breathing can become fast and irregular.
- It's believed that REM sleep consolidates your memories.
- Less REM sleep has been tied to an increased risk for death in middle-aged and older adults.
- Drinking alcohol before bed reduces the amount of REM you get.

You usually enter rapid the rapid eye movement stage an hour and a half to two hours after falling asleep. If you're an adult, you spend about 20 percent of your sleep time in REM; babies spend half of theirs in it. Your most vivid dreams and those you have the most recall occur during REM sleep.

Your blood pressure and pulse rate might increase during REM. Your pulse might increase in an irregular manner too, which can be an issue for those with heart issues.

Some scientists believe that the purpose of REM is to encode memory, in particular, procedural memory. This helps you to know how to do things and employ creative problem-solving. Case in point, remember the last time you had a lousy night's sleep and how difficult were even the simplest tasks the next day?

In REM, your mind reenergizes while your body is immobile. Your eyes move up and down and side to side, while your muscles—arms, legs, torso, and head—are paralyzed. Yes, paralyzed. It's nothing to be frightened about; it's called atonia; it's a natural way nature prevents you from hurting yourself during your active dreaming.

More on this in the next chapter.

Facts about poor REM sleep

- You don’t feel refreshed in the morning, and you might experience daytime sleepiness.
- Less REM means your brain doesn’t thoroughly remove waste products, particularly beta-amyloid, which is found in people with Alzheimer’s disease.
- Less REM might put you at risk for Parkinsonism.

Fast facts for better REM sleep

- Follow the same bedtime routine every night. This better prepares your mind and body for sleep.
- Reduce waking. Avoid loud sounds, an excessively warm bedroom, and bright lights (don’t look at your phone).
- Adults need 7 to 9 hours of sleep. Less sleep means you aren’t getting enough REM time.
- If medical conditions are affecting your sleep, check with your doctor.
- Don’t consume alcohol before bed. (Hey, don’t shoot the messenger.)

CHAPTER 4

SLEEP PARALYSIS AND EXPERIENCES OF THE SENSES

Sleep paralysis is the feeling of waking up and being totally aware but unable to move…

…call for help…

…or scream.

Sleep Paralysis

We ended the last chapter talking about how your mind paralyzes your body in REM, so you don't act out your dreams. This is natural, it happens to everyone, and there is no cause to worry about it. Except…when your mind wakes up before the rest of your immobile body. When that happens, it's called sleep paralysis—and it can be terrifying.

You can't move. Your eyes might dart around, but that's all you can do. It's a confusing experience, and your sense of vulnerability is through the roof.

Sleep experts say sleep paralysis is often a sign that your body is moving smoothly through the stages. It doesn't indicate a link to mental illness issues, as some people think. Nevertheless, sleep paralysis can scare the you-know-what out of a person, especially when the victim has never heard of it.

When I began thinking about this book, I asked nearly everyone I saw if they had experienced sleep paralysis. Many of them said they had, and some had seen or felt an entity. According to *Wikipedia*, with reference to *Handbook of Sleep Medicine*, 2011, Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, between 8% and 50% of people—men and women are affected equally—experience sleep paralysis at some time in their life. Why the span of 8 to 50 percent? I'm assuming it's a result of so many different surveys. One found up to 70 percent of the population has experienced sleep paralysis. Most, however, landed between 8 and 50. Of those, 5% have regular bouts of it.

People who have experienced one lone sleep paralysis event in their life are said to suffer from ISP, isolated sleep paralysis. People who experience it more than one time suffer from RISP, recurrent isolated sleep paralysis. In this latter group, some have had four of five sleep paralysis events. An unfortunate minority claim as many as four or five *per night*.

The physical cause of awakening while still paralyzed has yet to be chiseled in stone, but here are some theories.

- There is an overlap of REM (remember, sleep paralysis occurs in the rapid eye movement stage of sleep) and waking. Some studies show that people who experience sleep paralysis have shorter REM periods.
- The neural functions that control sleep are out of balance, which causes different stages to overlap.

- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can cause sleep paralysis.
- Narcolepsy, a condition that makes a person fall asleep whenever they are in a relaxing environment, can lead to sleep paralysis. It's considered one side effect of the disorder.
- Changing sleep schedules can have a negative effect on your mind and body, punishing you with fatigue, daytime sleepiness, and sleep paralysis.
- Besides causing anxiety, stress, and high blood pressure, lack of sleep can lead to sleep paralysis.
- Many people experiencing sleep paralysis say they were sleeping on their backs.
- Depressed people are more prone to sleep paralysis.
- Genetics might be a cause. If you have one or more family members who have experienced sleep paralysis, you are likely to experience it too.
- Anxiety can cause sleep paralysis.
- Alcohol and illegal drugs can bring on sleep paralysis.
- People who have panic attacks are vulnerable to sleep paralysis.

What Can Happen During Sleep Paralysis

During REM, the sleeper's mind imagines sights, sounds, smells, and even touches as part of a typical dream. Sometimes these things are pleasurable, and sometimes they are frightening, such as in a nightmare. For example, a parent will often dream that something tragic is happening to their child, and they wake up breathing hard, their heart thumping in their chest. While this is unnerving and can be traumatic, it's not abnormal. Many who have experienced sleep paralysis would agree that it's more terrifying than their worst nightmare. For those people, it's often an unforgettable experience that stays with them for years.

During sleep paralysis, your body remains paralyzed upon awakening. Some experts describe it as your body and mind being out of sync while transitioning between sleep stages.

The experience might last for just a few seconds or as long as a minute, sometimes two. While most people find that they can still move their eyes, some can't scream or call out for help. If they manage to utter something, it might sound like a grunt, whisper, or squeal.

Common symptoms of sleep paralysis are:

- being awake
- a temporary inability to move or speak
- only the eyes move
- pressure on the chest
- a feeling of suffocating
- a feeling of being outside the body
- ordinary house sounds trigger the imagination
- hallucinations
- feeling intense fear
- sweating
- feeling head and muscle pain
- a sense of helplessness

Your diaphragm (the primary muscle used in respiration) continually contracts as you breathe in and out. It's believed that feeling breathless or thinking that you're suffocating when you awaken in sleep paralysis, results from the limited muscles that are active to help you breathe. This is because in REM, only a few accessory muscles, like the rib cage, are engaged. Some people say they feel a sense of suffocation. Others say it feels as if someone were sitting on their chest.

Doctors say hallucinations happen as a result of errors in your brain's neural transmissions during and around REM sleep. The sense of helplessness that accompanies paralysis upon awakening triggers vivid and auditory hallucinations. Frightening? You bet, even when there is a scientific explanation for what is going on.

However…

It becomes apparent when looking at what the experts say about sleep paralysis, and the sights, sounds, and sensations people experience upon awakening is that not all explanations are written in stone. In fact, many doctors and scientists admit they aren't absolutely sure about *the why* and *the what* of sleep paralysis. But for now, this is their best sense of what is going on.

Will science discover new findings as to why people experience what they do? No doubt.

Will some explanations debunk the paranormal? No doubt again.

Will some of them be as absurd as those offered by debunkers of UFO sightings and abductions? You can count on it.

Will their explanations apply to every incident people experience? Impossible.

Here is a nagging question I'd like to hear scientists answer:

Why do so many people around the globe—many of whom have never heard of sleep paralysis, shadow people, hat man, and other creatures—see the same things?

More on this in a moment.

Can Sleep Paralysis Kill?

No. Although you might not believe that when you're smack in the middle of a terrifying episode.

While doctors say it won't kill you, it's not without adverse side effects.

- It disrupts your sleep and might leave you feeling groggy the next day.
- People who have never heard of sleep paralysis, and even those who have, might be fearful of going to sleep again, which might interfere with the quality of their rest.
- People who try to struggle against the paralysis by physically straining their muscles to free themselves from it might experience sore muscles the next day.

Doctors say that sleep paralysis is natural and has probably been around for as long as people have slept. Some accounts that claim it has killed sleepers might be the stuff of myth from various cultures around the world. Other stories might be the result of deadly heart attacks from the terror that often accompanies sleep paralysis and what people see under its influence. (See "An odd death" later in this chapter.

Hallucinations, Or Are They?

Some psychologists believe that the more we fear sleep paralysis, the higher the chance we will experience it. And the more we experience it, the more frightening it is. Once sleep paralysis occurs, it's interpreted through the lens of fear, leading to more anxiety, more unwanted awakenings, and more sleep paralysis.

Then add a second element: fear of seeing something terrible when our brain wakes up before our muscles do. So now, because we're afraid of sleep paralysis, we increase the chance it might happen to us, and our fear of seeing something increases the chance we will indeed see something terrible.

In short, if we dread it, we will experience it.

"Hallucinations" is a term that pundits use for what many people see, hear, and feel during sleep paralysis. Victims report seeing different types of intruders: shadow people, shadow animals, groups of shadows, aliens, and other entities. Some experience levitation off their bed and even floating out of their bedroom. (More on this later.)

It's believed that a hyper-vigilant state produced in the midbrain might be responsible for hallucinations. When a person wakes up paralyzed and feels defenseless against a threat, an emergency response triggers in the brain. The sense of helplessness often intensifies the sleeper's threat response more than it does in ordinary dreams. This could explain why dreams of dangers and visions of threats are so vivid.

Scientist say the hyper-vigilance response can contribute to a person's perceived threat of an evil presence in the room and that it's trying to kill them by choking or crushing their chest.

Some people say they are aware of everything around them during sleep paralysis; others report their awareness is only partial. A few found theirs doesn't extend beyond the threat and the ways it interacts with them.

It's not uncommon for people to see things in this state and hear, smell, and experience touch.

Let's break these down further.

What People See

Some people see one or more shadow entities during sleep paralysis. Others see lights of various colors or flashes of lights. Some see them in great detail, others not so much. A smaller number of people say they didn't see anything, but they sensed something was in the room with them.

In my case, I sensed a black mass next to me so intensely that I thought I saw it. But in the days that followed, I concluded that I didn't see anything at all; but I felt its size, shape, and color. Old-timers will remember the 1958 movie *The Blob,* that black, quivering mass that crept along consuming everything in its path. Mine was similar, except I didn't see it; I concluded it was there, on my right about hip level. So is it possible that some people only sense something present without really seeing it? Maybe. I did, but I can only speak for myself.

It's common for people to see an entity near their bed, sometimes sitting next to them. A few see only the entity's head or hand in the dark as if floating. On occasion, people see a shadow animal, such as a dog or cat.

Not long ago, my wife was drifting off when she saw something on the ceiling, four things, to be exact. They were squid-like, transparent, and about 18 inches long with multiple appendages that looked like tentacles without the suckers. She couldn't make out "facial" features. The quartet crawled toward her until they were directly overhead. When she began choking and gasping for air, they disappeared. Usually, people experience the physical symptoms of sleep paralysis first before their sighting. Her experience reversed the order.

Crazy? No more than red-eyed men wearing hats. Or an Egyptian shadow dog lying in a hallway and standing up, as John describes here.

John

Often when I get up to use the bathroom in the middle of the night, I see shadows out in the dark hall that extends straight out from the bedroom door. There is a long throw rug on the floor, and I see shadow shapes on or slightly above it. I usually just shrug these sightings off as a creation of my sleepy brain.

But it was different last night. I glanced out at the hall as I headed to the bathroom, but this time the dark shape wasn't like before. I stopped, puzzled at what I was seeing. Darker than the darkness in the rest of the hall, the shape appeared to be curled up like a medium-sized dog when it lays on the floor.

Then, what appeared to be the head, raised up as if to look at something. Was it looking at me? Its ears were upright, long, and pointed. My first thought was that it looked like an Egyptian Pharaoh dog.

Then it unwrapped itself and stood.

I took off for the bathroom, the goosebumps racing up and down my spine, my heart thumping in my chest. When I finished my business and started heading back to bed, I quick-glanced out into the hall.

There was nothing there.

Donald

My sleep paralysis didn't involve a shadow person. I saw a boy. I woke up, but I couldn't move. I kept trying to move my legs, then my arms, but it was like my brain's circuit to my body parts had shut off.

But I could move my eyes. And what I saw was a little boy just strolling around my room looking at things, sort of studying them. He went into my closet and came back out a few seconds later.

I closed my eyes—not unlike how a child hides when he's scared. When I opened them, the boy was gone.

A little boy doesn't sound like much of a threat, but he was really creepy at 4:15 in the morning.

Tank

I was sleeping at a friend's house, and I woke up just before sunup. I couldn't move, I couldn't yell out, nothing. I lay there looking up at the ceiling, for I don't know how long when I felt something looking at me.

I strained my eyes to see, and to my shock, five of these so-called shadow people were standing around my bed. I thought my heart was going to stop. They just kept looking at me for a long while.

Then they were gone, just like that.

Asia

I've seen shadow people when I wake up paralyzed, on three different nights now. I've done a little research and found that I'm not alone; there are thousands of people all over the world seeing the same thing. I've read about how it's just in our minds because it's part of sleep paralysis.

But how does that make sense? People all over the world seeing the same thing.

What People Hear

Usually, we read about people seeing something when experiencing sleep paralysis, but hearing sounds and voices are common too. Some hear the rain, crying children, wind, or someone laughing.

Or whispering.

Spooky? Creepy? Most think so. However, science says it shouldn't be because what people experience during sleep paralysis isn't real. They say your brain is trying to determine whether it's asleep or awake, so your experiences result from firing neurons in your grey matter.

Really? Each and every case? Lots of people would argue this.

Ellen

The last time I heard something in my sleep paralysis, it was the sounds of a gunfight, big ones like rifles. I've shot some before, but I don't think about them or dwell on them in any way. And I don't watch movies or TV shows with gun violence in them. But the sounds of a gun battle were intense.

Melisa

Our cat Rudy sleeps with my wife and me. The four times I've had sleep paralysis, I didn't see anything, but I could hear Rudy hissing. At least I think it was Rudy. God, I hope it was her. Jules, my wife, hears it too, and it wakes her up.

My question is this: If I don't see anything, but Rudy hisses like crazy, loud enough to wake my wife, what is the cat hissing at?

Mike

I learned that hearing things when you're falling asleep is called "hypnagogic hallucinations." This means that I'm experiencing them between when I'm awake and when I'm asleep. At first, I thought the voices were speaking to me from my mattress. Weird. But that's what they seemed like. Usually, the voice sounds very conversational but in a different language. I don't think it's paranormal.

Well, maybe it is.

Danny

I hear someone whispering, and the voice is saying my name. It's bizarre, and it makes me tense.

Toni

The whispering I hear keeps me awake. I'm just starting to go to sleep, and it starts up. I can't make out what it's saying, so it's kind of creepy. I get up and sit in a bedroom chair for a while, then I lay back down.

I wonder if it's a ghost.

Carl

I often hear people talking, like a group of them. Sometimes they sound normal, like what you'd hear at a gathering. But other times, the talking seems echoey and creepy, like in a horror movie.

One time, I was confused, and I thought if I closed the window, I wouldn't be able to hear the voices. But I couldn't move. I was paralyzed. It only lasted a minute or so, and then I was awake. It was really eerie.

Edith

I get sleep paralysis a lot. If that isn't bad enough, I hear whispering. Sometimes it's male and other times female. They whisper my name. Or hum. If they're spirits, my sense is they aren't going to harm me. But that's just a feeling I have. I hope it's right.

Roger

Why are whispers in the middle of the night so creepy? I don't know, but it's especially so when I can't move or call out to my girlfriend. And there is always more than one "person" whispering, but I can never understand what they're saying.

Tabitha

We have a wooden deck on the front of our house. Sometimes I wake up, and I can't move. Then I hear sounds on the deck, footsteps and other noises that I can't identify. Fear of the unknown is a terrible thing.

Karol Krauser Hasegawa

[Karol is a friend, veteran martial artist, yogi, teacher, and a strong advocate of living a healthy lifestyle, mentally and physically. He currently lives in Thailand.]

Looking back as a middle-aged man to the boy I was at 17, I remember it was definitely hard to wrap my head around my first sleep paralysis experience. I might have had a few earlier episodes as a child but nothing close to that June morning when I was in training at Ft. Sill Oklahoma.

Boot camp was over, and we were into our advanced individual training. Things had relaxed a little, which roughly translates to we weren't getting harassed 24/7 any longer, and we had some weekends off. On this particular Sunday morning, I was sleeping in our barracks dayroom, in an attached room at the end of the bay. It was a place to relax, lift weights, and play games.

It was right after Sunday breakfast, and I couldn't believe I actually had the place to myself. It didn't take long for me to settle into a relaxed, food-induced coma on the sofa.

Most of my life, I've favored sleeping belly down with a pillow propped up under my head, and this was how I remember dozing off as I looked across the room and out the window. It couldn't have been more than 20 minutes when a sound woke me. I didn't think it was coming from outside, but I couldn't tell where else.

The closest thing I could compare it to was Alfred Hitchcock's film, *The Birds*. That is, the sounds of birds attacking. But the noise I heard wasn't coming from a movie, it was in the room. Or…inside my head.

What I knew for sure was that it was getting louder.

I started freaking the hell out. It was time to leave. Or wakeup. Except I was awake.

Wasn't I?

Confusion.

I struggled to open my eyes, and, as I did, I could still see through the window across the room, the shadows of people and things moving. I could smell the morning's breakfast wafting over from the chow hall a few buildings away—but I could not move. I felt totally paralyzed, which only added to my confusion.

Sounds… Like the screaming at the beginning of Pink Floyds' song "Comfortably Numb," except I sure as hell wasn't comfortably numb. The screaming began to mix with the sound of moaning and squawking birds. It all grew louder and louder as I struggled to move off the sofa. But my body was refusing to cooperate, no matter how hard I mentally commanded it. It was as if a 300-pound entity was lying on me from head to foot.

Then I heard an echoing voice, ominous, leering. *"God be dammed, God be dammed, God be damned…"*

I had never been a fan of horror movies, but what was going on was about to snap my 17-year-old mind, regardless that I was a newly minted professional soldier.

There was no way to keep track of time, but looking back on it, I would estimate that my horrific experience lasted a minute, maybe two. Then it was over. First, the sounds faded, then the weight seemed to lift off me, allowing my body to once again work.

I flew off the couch and out the door crashing into a few of my fellow soldiers. They laughed at me, and asked, "What the hell is wrong with you?"

I called them a name and yelled, "You scared the hell out of me!"

They looked at each other, then at me. "Brother," one of them said, "we have no idea what you're talking about. What happened? You look like you've seen a ghost?"

I cursed under my breath and wandered off, rationalizing that maybe what I experienced was a spirit or spirits. A lot of Native Americans had been interred in the area in the name of civilizing them, so perhaps there were disgruntled Indian spirits about. I had grown up surrounded by that culture, so at the time, that made the most sense to me.

Fanny

I belong to a shadow people site where people discuss their experiences. It seems that people hear knocking, children playing, whispering, radio static, rushing water, something crashing on the floor, a shattering window, and more.

I don't think I hear anything when I've had it. But I see terrifying things. Darkness that moves and heaves toward me. Maybe it has a sound but I'm too focused on the sight.

Ethan

My wife and I were having problems, and one afternoon she left me and took our toddler with her. She went to stay at a girlfriend's house. That night I woke up hearing my child crying. I got up and went into her nursery, but of course, she wasn't there. I don't remember if I had sleep paralysis first. I don't think this was paranormal, but just part of the stress of what was happening in my marriage, which I've read can trigger this kind of thing.

At least that's what I tell myself. But it sure seemed real.

Robert K. Williams

[The following excerpt is from *Deconstructing a Paradigm; A Treatise for the Unbelievable,* by Robert K. Williams.]

The following occurred at a residential treatment facility for the chemically dependent. The first time I became aware of the strange activity was when I read about it in a client's (patient's) file. In it, the female reported that she heard what she thought was a radio when she awakened every morning for about a week. Once she was fully awake, the sound stopped. I didn't think much about it; it was just a radio playing too loudly in another room.

Or was it?

The staff would have been quick to silence a radio loud enough to penetrate the walls and wake up other clients. Furthermore, it would be a coincidence that it would subside virtually every morning right after the woman awakened.

Then I learned that at least one other female client in a different wing reported hearing the same thing. That woman said she was awakened by the radio at the same time. She also saw three additional unexplainable sights. She saw a red light glowing under her closed door as if the outside hallway were lit in crimson. The floor in her room appeared to be wet, and she saw what looked like a Native American man with long hair…hanging in her closet.

This woman had a calm demeanor, not given to random fabrications, and positively not mentally ill, as were some of the other clients. She identified as a Christian, so I will refer to her as Christina.

It's also important to note that the treatment facility was in an area in Minnesota wherein 1862, there occurred a mass execution of Native Americans—by hanging.

As other clients began to experience similar occurrences, it became a topic of discussion in a group therapy session that I facilitated. At least three different clients reported seeing spots of light or orbs in their periphery, as did Christina. Some saw a mobile cloud of mist, and one client said he saw it move across his body as he lay in bed. Others claimed that the showers had been turning on by themselves.

One morning, a client named Nancy woke to feel her mattress compressing around her as if someone were standing on it. This made her scream, which roused many of the clients. Christina had been looking at the hanging man when she heard Nancy.

Clients, who believed the place to be haunted—as did some of the staff—were more open to speaking about their experiences than others. Nancy said nothing of hers, not to me anyway.

One client whose beliefs appeared to align more with a New Age religion wasn't shy about expressing her feeling that the experiences were spiritual. Christina was open to speaking about it as well. Still, Christina was reluctant to attribute what she saw to a spiritual cause.

She told me she was worried about her mental state, fearing that she experienced some rare, lingering effect of her chronic drug use. I asked how others saw and heard the same hallucinations if the manifestations resulted from post-acute withdrawal syndrome or an organic brain disorder.

A strange thing happened then. On the one hand, Christina managed to concede to my point. On the other, she found it difficult to believe it could be anything other than physical sickness. This is often referred to as cognitive dissonance, meaning, Christina was holding two contradictory thoughts or beliefs.

[Robert K. Williams comments about the occurrences]

I find this strange because of Christina's faith. It seemed that she ought to have been the most open to the metaphysical explanations, but this was not the case. Yet the fact that at the same time so many others began having similar experiences was proof enough that the issue was not physical,

mental, or subjective. Therefore, there was no room for any other explanation, except that provided by the treatment team.

Every morning, my colleagues and I met in our conference room to address any emergent issues and review reports from the previous shift, to include Christina's experiences. As the team considered the possibility of a mental health issue, I reminded them that many other clients had experienced the same things.

My colleagues decided that the clients were sharing their experiences and causing themselves to hallucinate merely by talking about it.

I was baffled by this and wanted to refute their reasoning. I wanted to ask how often somebody told them a story, which subsequently caused them to have a hallucination of it. Do people who watch the *History Channel* hallucinate confederate soldiers after viewing a Civil War program? No. Because talking about things doesn't incite hallucination of them.

But I held my tongue. It seems best for one in a professional position not to identify as a believer in the metaphysical. However, science confirms it, and logic corroborates it.

I felt that coming out of my paranormal closet would have yielded no favorable results with my fellow workers.

Beth

I am paralyzed when I wake up, but I don't see anything like some people do. I've never seen a shadow being or a hat man. But I hear things.

Often, it's a woman's voice, and she is saying the same thing over and over. I don't understand her words, but I can tell by the pattern that it's the same thing. Other times I hear what sounds like two or three people talking. But again, I don't understand what they're saying.

Sal

One time, I was having one of my sleep paralysis things, when I heard someone scream in my ear. I couldn't move, and now someone was screeching at me. I kept saying in my mind, "God help me. God help me." He must have because it stopped. I experienced this one other time, and I did the same thing. It worked again.

I hope that's the end of it.

Tasha

I just had my seventh night in a row of sleep paralysis. I'm actually afraid to go to sleep because I keep hearing sounds—banging, breathing, whistles, a and strange vibration. When I can move again, I don't hear anything.

Linn

I just hear a buzz in my ears. No, it's not tinnitus; I know what that sounds like. Mine comes from the outside of my head.

Burton

Once as I was just falling asleep, I heard a male voice next to my head saying, "When you wake up later, we'll be here." It scared the holy hell out of me. Some people say they are afraid to go to sleep, but I was scared to wake up.

Anton

First, I couldn't move a muscle, and second, I heard approaching footsteps. It was terrifying not to be able to run or in any way defend myself.

I heard them walk around my room and then finally pass through the door out into the hall. Then I didn't hear anything except for my own heartbeat.

Bobbi

I couldn't turn my head. I couldn't even move my eyes. I just kept looking at the ceiling as I heard footsteps moving around my bedroom, opening and shutting doors.

I live by myself.

Buddy

I was more scared than I have ever been. I just laid there hearing someone moving around in my bedroom. Hearing and feeling a presence that was malevolent.

As evident in these stories, hearing things can be equally as disconcerting as seeing a shadow form. This is underscored when the

sounds seem to come from something that lives, *or lived.* Sounds can emphasize our fear of the unknown.

While the saying "what you don't know can't hurt you" can be debated, there isn't an argument when the expression is tweaked to "what you don't see but can hear, can terrify you." A lot.

What People Smell

It's not uncommon for ghost hunters to smell such things as flowers, cigar smoke, and perfume in rooms where ghosts and spirits have been seen. Upon further investigation, it's
often learned that, say, the same perfume was worn by a woman who passed on. Sometimes it's a deceased grandfather who smoked a pipe in the same part of the home where paranormal investigators detected it.

In *Cops' True Stories of the Paranormal,* I wrote about a prisoner who would stand outside his cell and smoke. After he died, other prisoners, and later people touring the closed prison, smelled cigarette smoke as they passed the same cell.

People experiencing sleep paralysis have reported smelling specific odors. Though it's not as common as seeing, feeling, and hearing things, it does happen. But here is the rub. Scents can't disrupt sleep, at least according to a May 18th, 2004 article in *Science Daily* www.sciencedaily.com titled "Scents Will Not Rouse Us From Slumber." Sounds can, the Brown University study found, as well as heat, cold, and so on. But not odors.

So don't count on the smell of smoke to awaken you when your home is ablaze. But wait. The media often reports about people awakened by the odor of smoke and fleeing in the nick of time. So how can this be?

Here is the gist of the Brown University study.

"Researchers studied the effects of two odors—pleasurable peppermint and offensive pyridine (an unpleasant scent present in coal tar and used chiefly as a solvent)—on six participants in their early 20s.

"Over two nights, participants wore an elastic chin strap to encourage nose breathing. Researchers presented odors through a tube attached to an air-dilution device. The odors were tested during moderately deep Stage Two sleep, deep Stage Four sleep [now included in Stage 3 sleep], and REM (rapid eye movement) sleep.

“No one responded to peppermint during sleep. Responses to the intense and noxious pyridine were infrequent and did not wake any participants in the deepest stage of sleep. However, sound woke the participants regardless of the sleep stage.

“A moderately loud auditory tone produced arousal from sleep virtually every time the scents did not.”

Regardless of the study, people report waking to a variety of odors when there is no explanation as to the source. Can it be argued that the sleepers simply woke up on their own and happened to smell the scent? Or can it be argued that noise woke them, but it was gone by the time they were fully awake?

Sure, there are arguments for virtually everything.

Hattie

Sometimes I smell perfume when I have sleep paralysis. I even know the brand from when I worked a counter at Macy’s, but no one wears it in my house.

Robbie

I smelled old tobacco, that odor some heavy smokers have on their bodies. Or maybe it’s in their pores. Ick. There is no reason for this odor because I don’t smoke, and neither do any of my friends. I only smelled it the two times I woke up and couldn’t move.

Babe

I recently awoke to the smell of burning wires, like there was a fire in the walls. One time when I was little, I sniffed smoke for real because our house was on fire. But when I smelled the burning wires, I couldn’t move, and the place wasn’t on fire.

Stanly

Three times during my sleep paralysis, I’ve smelled flowers, and there were no flowers in the house.

Trish

I've had sleep paralysis a lot with all the usual symptoms: I can't move, it feels like someone is on my chest, and sometimes I hear things. But one of the worst was when I was paralyzed for a few seconds, and I couldn't move or call out, but I could smell this awful, and I mean awful, stench.

On two occasions I've smelled dead and decaying deer (my dad used to hunt), but the stench that woke me up was many times worse.

When I felt someone or something embrace me, the smell got even worse. It was obvious that whatever it was "hugging" me was the cause. The whole thing ended when I started praying to Jesus to help me. I woke up, and everything was gone.

I don't want to experience that again.

Joyce

I've only had sleep paralysis once. When I woke up on my back, I could see my brother who died six years ago standing by my bed. I could see him, and I could smell his aftershave. It was just so strange.

Alain

I've had sleep paralysis so much that I can tell when it's coming on when I'm asleep. Maybe I'm waking up, but it feels like I'm still asleep.

I smell puke.

And it's extreme and very, very unpleasant. Then when I wake up, I'm paralyzed, and I can smell it even more. There haven't been many times when I've detected something. Usually, I see things, or I just lay there scared because I can't move.

Tish

Twice I've been awakened by a terrible odor. I open my eyes, I can't move, I detect a terrible smell, and an old man is leaning over me screaming.

I can't find the words to say how petrifying that was.

What People Feel: Sensations, Pain

People report feeling a sensation of floating.

Some feel pain that continues to hurt for a while after they awaken. Others report a sensation of being crushed or strangled. You know you're

having a bad night's sleep when you experience all these things simultaneously.

Victims have told of being touched sexually on their privates; others believe they have been raped. It's so common there are names for the perpetrators:

Incubus is an entity—some say a spirit or demon—that attacks women for sexual intercourse while sleeping in bed.

Succubus is a supernatural entity in female form that attacks men.

Succubus

Some Christian fundamentalists believe such sexual activity is carried out by demons. They tell people it isn't a dream, and it's not in their imagination. They say that to stop it, they need to seek spiritual help. Other people suggest the victim see a medical doctor or talk with a psychologist.

Some believe there might be a correlation between experiencing these things during sleep paralysis and having a history of molestation as a child.

Feeling that you're being touched during sleep paralysis episodes is really quite common. You're lying there, and you feel something crawling on you. You might feel pressure with it, or the touch might be gentle, nonetheless spine-chilling.

Then there is the sensation of someone or something sitting on you. It might be a pinning weight on your legs or a crushing feeling on your torso.

Some victims say that they felt something pulling them from their beds. Others have felt hands around their neck.

Some scientists say that a feeling of physical touch—sexual, crushing, pulling, squeezing—is determined by where you are in your head when you wake up paralyzed. For example, if you feel helpless and terrified because you're unable to defend yourself, you're more likely to hallucinate terrible physical contact.

In short, the scientists in this study suggest what people feel is conjured in their minds.

Many experiencers shake their heads and argue that what they felt was absolutely real. In fact, it's common for the sensation or pain to continue for a while after they get out of bed. On the flip side of the coin, some experiencers say they don't know if what they felt was real or only a product of their active imagination.

Blake

I was sleeping in our spare bedroom when I awoke and couldn't move. A couple of seconds later, I saw this black shape—not a human figure but like a mass. It moved toward me, but I couldn't move. When it reached me, I was pulled off my bed almost all the way. There weren't arms or anything, but I could feel it pull me. Then I came out of it, and the mass was gone.

A'lyse

I woke and couldn't move. It scared me to death, but what actually woke me was a feeling that something was crawling on my arms and legs. It totally sent me over the top.

Dan

I was sleeping, and if I was dreaming about something, I don't remember. But what I felt as I woke up was something pulling my arms and legs. It was trying to pull me off the bed, but it didn't get me all the way, though.

Case

I was awakened by something pulling on my feet as if to drag me off the bed. I saw an image at the foot of my bed; it was like an animal, one with things coming out of its head, like horns or something. When I was all the way awake, it crawled up over me and pressed his hands down on my face. Then it was gone. I don't know if I woke up some more, or it just disappeared.

I've never been so scared.

Louis

I have sleep paralysis once in a while, and about half those times, I feel and see myself floating around my bedroom. I've read about people who say they were abducted. They were floated out of their room and into a UFO. But I just hovered around. My girlfriend says this is cool, but it's not.

It turns me into trembling child.

Will

I've woke up unable to move on four separate nights. I feel myself levitate above the bed and float. I can look down and see my wife and our poodle sleeping on the bed. I saw a documentary about people having near-death experiences. They say they can see themselves float above other people.

The last time I was floating above my wife and dog, I just dropped back down onto the bed.

Davis

A couple of times when I woke up and couldn't move, I could feel my feet and legs being touched. The worse experience was when a shadow figure with glowing yellow eyes sat on the bed by me. He didn't do anything for a long time, then all of a sudden, he wrapped his arm around my neck.

He didn't really choke me, but I could feel his arm as if he was about to.

Joanne

Two years ago, when I was pregnant, I was worried about my baby for no particular reason other than I don't like doctors. I had sleep paralysis several times a week. It seems like the more I stressed about having a scary night, the more I had the paralysis.

I hated it.

Jill

I've only had sleep paralysis one time. I could feel my hair and face being touched. I couldn't see anything, only feel. I remember how hard I shook.

Carrie

Sometimes I feel my bed jarred like someone bumped their hip against it. I'm not always asleep when it happens. I have a friend who said she feels her dog jump up on hers and lay down by her feet. But it died a few months earlier.

She keeps its ashes in a bookcase out in her living room.

My Experiences with crushing

The words "crushing" and "sleeping" should never be in the same sentence. But they happened to me. Before I tell of my experiences, allow me to preface it with a word about my involvement with fear.

My first coppery taste of it occurred during my midnight descent into Vietnam in 1969. There was the eerie and tangible hush of 400 trembling soldiers pondering their fate as our passenger jet, the interior and exterior lights extinguished so as not to draw enemy fire, dropped lower and lower as artillery flashes outside the small windows illuminated the shape of hills and rice paddies.

The 12 months that followed offered much more gut-twisting, heart palpating, knees trembling, and difficulty breathing moments of terror and dread.

After I got home, I joined the Portland Police Bureau in Oregon. I worked street patrol, guarded presidents and candidates, served on the arrest team during many street riots, taught defensive tactics and officer survival techniques in the academies, and worked street gangs, specializing in white supremacists.

I was involved in three shootings, shot at twice, and I attended the funerals of officers who made the ultimate sacrifice. Although I was well trained for the job, plus I worked out with weights and I owned a private martial arts school, there were still many times when I was afraid—hands trembling, eyes watering, and jaw quivering afraid.

Here's my point. The two experiences I've had with sleep paralysis and a terrible black form that tried to crush me the first time and latched painfully onto my arm the next, frightened me more intensely than any experience I had during the war and 25 years working in law enforcement.

Here is what I experienced on two separate nights. I've also added a third incident that happened several years earlier.

In 2019, I was working on a book titled *Seekers of the Paranormal.* I spent months writing, researching, and interviewing knowledgeable people on ghost hunting, communicating with the dead, and investigating UFO sightings and abductions. Whether this focus was related to what happened to me on two occasions, I'm not sure. But what I do know is that I've never had an experience like them before, and it would be fine with me if I didn't have any more of them.

The first night, I was having a hard time sleeping, so I tiptoed out of the bedroom, closed the door behind me, and plopped down on the living room sofa. Around 3 a.m., I finally got sleepy and stretched out with a quilt.

An hour later, maybe two, and between sleep and wakefulness, I felt a crushing weight on my head, chest, abdomen, and legs. I didn't see anything, though I was aware of an entity. I sensed it was black, solid, as big as me or bigger, and I felt it slowly draping itself over my body with its overpowering and suffocating weight.

To reiterate, I couldn't see anything tangible, but I felt its blackness, solidness, size, and I felt its weight.

I awakened all the way, aware that I was in the living room on the leather sofa. A tremendous weight continued to press down on me, all of me, ever so slowly pushing me deeper and deeper into the cushions. The message my brain was sending my muscles—move, resist, fight—was going unanswered. As I said earlier, I have known fear in my life, but nothing like this.

What was this unseen force that was crushing me and inhibiting my breathing? Why was I so absolutely helpless to do anything about it?

I shouted for my wife, but she couldn't hear me because I had closed the bedroom door.

Then the crushing lessened, not all the way, but I was just happy it wasn't getting any worse. My chest, shoulders, and arms still hurt, and I called for my wife again—I might have screeched it—but she was having pleasant dreams and not aware of anything.

A minute or two later, I could sit up. The room was dark, and I couldn't see anything, but for an instant, I wondered if I were alone. I'm not sure now if I was sensing something or just wondering. What I did know was my torso hurt as if a sumo wrestler had been sitting on me.

Later that day, I contacted one of the paranormal investigators and two of the mediums who contributed to *Seekers of the Paranormal.* They were immediately concerned and stressed that we smudge the house with Palo Santo wood.

My wife did, and all was good until about three months later.

My experience with grabbing

I haven't a clue if this is related to the crushing incident, but it did happen about three months later. Same location—maybe it's the sofa—and I was sleeping. This time something was grabbing my right arm. I couldn't determine if the "something" was human, but as was the case the last time, I could sense that it was black, had mass, and was a threat.

As hard as I struggled, I couldn't free my limb.

Like three months earlier, I yelled for my wife—my ego wants to believe it was a masculine yell, but I was probably screaming like a child.

I continued to struggle until I was suddenly aware that she was there, asking if I was okay. My arm still hurt, though I was almost fully awake. I replied, "What?" confused for a nanosecond by her question.

"You were yelling," she said. "It sounded strange."

I told her something had my arm. Something black and ominous. It was still hurting too, and for a moment, I wondered if it was still gripping my arm and if my racing heart would ever return to normal?

The pain progressively subsided until it was finally gone.

My nerves remained rattled.

As discussed throughout this book, these events frighten people. I, too, was petrified, which is especially interesting to me. I'm a 200-pound guy. I've lifted weights since I was 13, I've been training in the martial arts since 1965, I've been in a war, and I experienced 25 years as a cop working the mean streets. In short, I don't frighten easily.

But these two experiences were unmatched by anything previous.

There are probably two reasons for the intensity of my terror, and that's exactly what it was—terror.

First, I was absolutely powerless to resist or flee. All my years of training were of no use against the unseen. And I've trained against all kinds of assaults and dealt with them in actuality on the street.

Second, and possibly the most significant catalyst for my fear, was the unknown factor. I could sense a presence, one that felt large and without shape. Dark like a blob of black. Alive and dangerous.

Happily, I haven't had many nightmares in my sleeping life. When my kids were little, there were nights when I would dream about them drowning. Interestingly, my youngest daughter told me recently that she too has had dreams about her kids drowning.

I also used to dream I was on duty in uniform and in a police car when someone jerked open the driver's door and tried to pull me out. Other officers tell of dreaming they are being shot at while unable to return fire. Usually, extra training at the firing range increases the officers' confidence, and the bad dreams cease. In my case, I drilled on defenses against a bad guy trying to pull me out of my patrol car.

But how do you train to defend against a shadow entity in your bedroom?

My only other dream with some similarities to the crushing and grabbing was a biting nightmare I had in the Army.

Biting

In 1967, after I graduated from the Army's military police school in Fort Gordon, I was sent to Texas to train a sentry dog to patrol and attack. After graduating, my dog, Fritz, and I were sent to Florida to protect an Army missile base on the edge of the Everglades.

One night I was sleeping in the bunkhouse between patrol shifts when I saw and felt a sentry dog's mouth clamp onto my face around my jaw and nose area, and pressure bite me for a few seconds.

A German shepherd has a pounds per square inch (PSI) bite of around 240 pounds. (Some websites claim a much higher PSI, but these are believed to be false.)

I jerked awake, the pain in my face sending the pain-o-meter into the red zone. Even after I got up, my face continued to hurt, albeit less and less) for a few hours.

This was a long time ago, and I don't know if it was a sleep paralysis experience. I mention it here only because there is a remote chance that it was. For sure, it happened while I was sleeping and seemed to continue for a while after I woke up.

Could it have been one of our dogs? No. Those that weren't out on patrol were in their kennels, plus I was sleeping on the top bunk.

The power of the dream left an impression, to use a pun, a painful one that lasted a long while.

Fear of Experiencing These Things Again

As mentioned earlier, you probably feel most vulnerable in the bath and in bed. Night after night, you sleep soundly and safely. You take comfort in that, joy even. It's your safe place.

Then one night, horror comes to visit. You can't move, you can't scream, you're terrified, and the horrific feeling lasts long after you manage to finally move, turn on the dresser lamp, and look around to see if you're alone.

The next night, that sense of security in your bed is no longer there. That presumed sense of safety and invulnerability are gone. The wall is down. *Whatever that thing was, will it revisit me again? Will it return as soon as I close my eyes? Will it hurt me?*

Will it drive me mad with fear?

Science says those things you saw, felt, or heard were just in your mind. But they were so tangible. The terror you felt was real, more intense than anything you've felt before.

And now you're afraid to sleep.

I was not just a little nervous crashing on the sofa again after my experiences. Rain on the skylight added to the atmosphere in the dark room, and brush moving outside the window made the old ticker speed up. The

usual creaks and other house settling noises ignited my adrenaline a few times.

So that a bright digital clock under the TV stand doesn't bother me, I bunch up the blankets to block it from view. Sometimes though, I inadvertently move in such a way the blanket drops just enough to expose the clock's lit face. But in my mind, for just a second, the fluctuation in the light makes me think something moved past the clock in the dark room. When this happens, my heart rate leaps into the red zone.

For some people, understanding what is happening to their bodies and minds during sleep paralysis is enough to eliminate future fears. But for others, the experience was so terribly real that all the explanations from the scientific and psychology community are of no help. Especially, when their answers don't fit every situation.

One Psychologist's Thoughts

Doctor Wilcox

[John is a friend, and a firm believer in the paranormal. He sent me this short transcript of a conversation he had with a psychologist. The doctor has been practicing for several decades and is respected by peers and patients alike. He is a firm believer in science and has no patience for talk of the paranormal].

John I told the doctor about your book *Seekers of the Paranormal* and about another one you were working on [the book you hold in your hands]. Then I said the following to feel him out. I had a pretty good idea of what he would say.

"What is interesting to me about sleep paralysis is how people around the world see the same thing: most often a shadow entity with close to identical characteristics to others who have had experiences. Some people experience entities other than shadows, and they too are frightening. And there have been occasions when other people in the same house see the same entity—and they aren't asleep. Many of those who tell Loren of their stories had never heard of shadow people before they experienced one. How is this possible if sleep paralysis is simply a freak event in which the body wakes up while the muscles are still paralyzed?"

Doctor Wilcox "Many people have sleep paralysis. Mine often takes the form of seeing fast approaching floodwater; sometimes there are entities involved, etc. It's not a big deal, but I can see where it might be scary for people who don't know what it is, or are superstitious, or have some type of anxiety disorder.

John I've had experiences of sleep paralysis, and it scared the crap out of me. I saw a shadow man each time, and he always laid on me, crushing me into my bed. Once, I could feel him pulling on me like he wanted me off the bed.

Doctor Wilcox These hallucinations feel very real. Once when I saw the floodwater, I saw and heard several children singing and playing in my bedroom. Sometimes when I'm paralyzed, I see someone clearly standing over by my closet. It's disconcerting at the time, but it's no big deal once I'm awake. This happens to me about five times a year—and it's perfectly normal.

Do I believe an actual person is standing there? No. All of these sights and sounds are my sleep-brain's wild inventiveness. Dreams take us on journeys, some are cool, others chilling, but always interesting. Just remember these are normal fabrications of our imagination and nothing for us to be afraid of.

Can We Prove It's More Than The Scientific Explanation?

Despite what science says about sleep paralysis and the terrifying things people experience in the dark when they're unable to move or call out, some occurrences contain elements that cannot be explained away by people wearing lab coats. As one woman said after detailing her out-of-the-norm sleep paralysis experience, "Explain *that* away, Mister Science Man!"

It's possible "Mr. Science Man" can't. Did you notice in the conversation with Dr. Wilcox that he didn't address why so many people see the same entities?

There is a conflict between what people who have experienced things paranormal when awakening from sleep, and those in the scientific field who only believe what they can prove with test tubes and microscopes.

Right now, there is no way science can record or study paranormal experiences during sleep paralysis. So it's up to us to document what happened to us. Will doing so satisfy the requirements of scientific proof? No. But until there is a way, that's all we've got.

Will this conflict between what science needs and what people experience ever cease? Will we ever all just get along? At this juncture, I don't see how.

An Odd Death

As noted earlier, no known deaths have resulted from seeing a shadow person or other entities. While writers on blogs and websites exploring the phenomenon say this all the time, how do they know, especially when a person dies alone?

On that note, let me tell you about a death call I had where a man died alone in his room.

In my 25 years as a cop in Portland, Oregon, I responded to many dead body calls. There were suicides and homicides, of course, but we also had to cover "naturals" (died of natural causes) if the death wasn't witnessed by someone. I found victims of natural deaths in bathrooms, living rooms, garages, but mostly in bedrooms, under the covers, or lying across the bed.

One of the things I found strange and uncomfortable was the expression on the faces of the deceased. Murder victims and suicides generally looked surprised. The homicide victim didn't plan on having his or her life snuffed that day, so their expression was usually one of shock and pain. The suicide victim's face was often similar to the natural death face—horror, mouth twisted, eyes wide and staring, hands formed into claws.

Later, I would mention the face contortions to my partners, and I'd say, "You have to wonder if the deceased person's expression in death was from their realization that this life was over. Or, maybe at the moment they ceased living, they saw something horrific awaiting them on the other side of life."

Doctors say that the facial expressions and claw-like hands are a result of contracted muscles and other natural causations at the moment of death.

That makes sense, but why do some have it and others don't? Why does this guy look like he saw something so frightening that it stopped his heart, but the next person's expression looked like the man drifted off peacefully?

One day, I got a call on a guy who died alone in his bed in a low rent apartment house downtown. The man—I don't remember his age, but he was probably over 70—was lying in bed, an undisturbed blanket tucked neatly under his neck.

When responding to a natural, one of my tasks was to note any prescription drugs in the residence and look for anything that might not look right. Not finding anything suspicious, the apartment manager and I pulled the blanket and sheet down to the foot of the bed to observe the condition of the man's body.

The deceased was wearing a T-shirt that displayed a small circle of red over the left side of his chest. We pulled the shirt up to discover a perfectly round hole over his heart with minimal bleeding. It looked like a bullet hole to me, so I called for a detective team to investigate and a medical examiner to pick up the body.

Often, I had to sit with the dead for several hours when there were multiple deaths on those nights when the medical examiners were short-staffed. Happily, this time one was close and arrived before the detectives.

I pulled back the covers to show him the hole in the man's chest. "Looks like a twenty-two caliber to me," I said. The ME got down close and personal and examined the wound, to include sticking an instrument into it to measure the depth. (Early in my career, I saw several medical examiners probe bullet holes with their bare fingers. (This was before AIDS, I should add.)

"Nope, not a bullet," he announced straightening to his full height. "The man blew his heart. A full-on, very powerful heart attack that created the hole."

"That can happen?"

He rattled off some medical jargon, the gist of which was it was rare but possible.

Now, I no longer remember if the deceased was displaying the horror grimace. I had so many dead bodies over the years, sometimes three or four a week, that I can't remember them all.

However, the hole in his heart, I recall vividly.

The poor man died alone in his little flophouse apartment, located deep in Portland's skid row, a place with a violent history dating back to the 1800s. Might he have awakened to witness something so horrifying that its shock, the absolute fright of it, exploded his heart? Could he have had a sleep paralysis moment and saw something?

You might be familiar with Portland, Oregon's Shanghai Tunnels, as they are often featured in the numerous paranormal TV programs that investigate haunted locations.

In short, from the mid-19th century to the early 1940s, the tunnels connected basements of bars, flophouses, and hotels to the waterfront. They were used to transport goods from ships to businesses, provide a place for prostitutes to ply their trade, and an underground route to carry unconscious drunks, victims of a knockout blow to their skulls, to waiting ships. When they awoke in the morning, they discovered they were suddenly part of the crew. Hence the term, "shanghai."

The elderly man in my story lived above the tunnels.

Eliminating Sleep Paralysis

Eliminating sleep paralysis is beyond the scope of this book but allow me to briefly mention it. If you type in "how to stop sleep paralysis" in your favorite search engine (I use Bing.com), you will find many sites offering tips. There are similarities in the lists, and while I don't have experience with them, I don't see any harm in those I've looked over.

The authors of the lists didn't mention this, but keep in mind that you might have to experiment with methods to see what works for you due to significant differences in each person. Your best friend might have found five techniques that work for her, but it doesn't mean they will work for you. Happily, there are lots of lists online to try.

When in doubt, talk to your doctor.

I even found a list on how to induce sleep paralysis. Yeah, really. The motivation, apparently, is to have more lucid dreams. Now, I'm not in any way a health professional, but this seems a little goofy. Maybe the argument is that if you're *deliberately* trying to bring on sleep paralysis, it won't be so frightening.

Most medical people say sleep paralysis doesn't generally cause physical harm. Still, it can produce anxiety, cause significant psychological

suffering, and worsen existing sleep problems. As we've discussed, when a person experiences sleep paralysis, experts believe they had trouble transitioning smoothly through the many sleep stages. In some cases, they might have jumped from wakefulness to REM without progressing through the three stages of NREM.

Why take the chance of making this condition worse just to have a lucid dream?

CHAPTER 5

A CLOSER LOOK AT SHADOW ENTITIES

You awaken to see the usual rectangle of hallway light on the bedroom floor. But this time, there is a shadow figure in it. When you look toward the doorway, there is no one there, and when you look back at the rectangle, the shadow is gone.

Old Hag

"Old Hag" is an often-used term to describe sleep paralysis and the entities that people sometimes see when they are unable to move. The name comes

from the belief that a witch, sometimes called Old Hag, is responsible for the experience that prevents the just awakened from moving or calling out. We can assume that most cultures don't believe in the witch theory these days, but the frightening nature of the event still remains.

An article in occult-world.com states, "The syndrome takes its name from a term for witches. In the Middle Ages, it was believed that witches, or 'hags' or 'old hags,' would sit on a person's chest at night and 'ride,' causing exhaustion and feelings of suffocation—thus the term 'hagridden' to describe a rundown feeling."

I'm guessing the term is falling out of favor because I rarely came across it in my research for this book. Shadow man, hat man, and shadow entities were the most common.

Mixed Opinions

Shadow beings seem to favor the dark and most often appear to people at night when they are sleeping in a dark bedroom. However, since it seems there are no absolutes in the paranormal world, people also report seeing them during the day. We'll get to that later. For now, let's focus on the ones that visit you at night when you are most vulnerable.

Some people experience them only once in their lifetime. In contrast, others say they have been visited often, some two or three times a week. People who claim to be experts in the paranormal hypothesize that the entities are deliberately watching specific individuals. In some cases, they have attached themselves to selected people.

Psychologists believe people create shadow entities themselves. That is, for whatever reason, people construct them in their imagination.

Other people believe that since they are religious, the shadow figures targeting them are dark angels, demons, and other satanic creatures.

Are shadow people ghosts? People who think so, believe the entities lack sufficient electromagnetic field spikes to form the usual wispy image we associate with ghosts. Nor are they able to communicate with us via electronic voice producing devices. Incapable of doing these things, they form as shadows.

Could it be possible they are simply apparitions that are afraid of the living? Maybe. They certainly dash off when people see them. One person said his impression was the shadow entity was as frightened of him as he

was of it. His conclusion was that maybe he (the human) was absorbing the shadow person's fear and making it his own.

A minority of folks claim they aren't afraid of the shadow people they encounter, claiming that there is little evidence to show that the dark beings are evil. While evidence shows this might be true, one would think that awakening to see the deep shadow of a human figure walking up the side of the bed would cause some anxiety. One experiencer says that claims of not being afraid are "swaggering bluster" and "stupidity." As in all things, everyone has an opinion.

So many thoughts and varied experiences, but we can agree that shadow entities appear to many people when they wake up in the dark and discover they can't move. Or they wake up, not paralyzed at all, and see a shadow entity.

For most, these are terrifying experiences with few parallels.

Fear Of The Unknown

We discussed fear and creepy in Chapter 1, and we look at fear and how to control it in Chapter 9. There is another element called "fear of the unknown," a terribly intense reaction that many people experience when confronted by shadow entities.

Many SWAT officers have a saying that goes, "Darkness is my friend," a play on "Hello darkness, my old friend," from the song "The Sound of Silence" by Simon and Garfunkel. Some military units use it too. It merely means that these officers and military troops work well under the cloak of nightfall, a place where lawbreakers and the enemy typically operate and conceal themselves.

People whose job doesn't involve facing human predators in the shadows, function in the darkness somewhere between debilitating fear and "I'm okay in the dark, but I'd rather have a light on."

Fear, in its many intensities, is about the unknown, what can't be seen under the cloak of black. Therefore, it's not much of a stretch to feel heightened fright when something in that black— a thing blacker and denser than all the rest—moves. Sometimes it has glowing eyes. And wears a hat, for crying out loud.

Not only do we fear it, but we also assign evil intentions to it. It's ultra-dark, its shape is somewhat human, and it often appears when we can't

move or cry out.

Because we don't expect to see anything like that, it violates our sense of safety, and it frightens us. This intense fear makes some people see shadow entities as evil and sent by Satan.

Maybe it's all part of our imagination, as some psychologists suggest.

Will Shadow People Kill You?

There is no evidence in the literature and no anecdote that I know where someone has been killed by a shadow person. One might scare the dickens out of you, but kill you? There is no confirmation, no data.

That is unless you believe some of the people who comment on paranormal websites.

Usually, the claim goes something like this: "I know shadow people can kill you because I know a guy whose second cousin knows a guy who saw it happen." Okaaaay.

Let me conclude this subsection by reiterating what I've been saying about being careful of the information that's out there on television and online. Consider this.

I know a ghost hunter who shall go unnamed, but he and his team live in England. They do outstanding work and have invested time and money to do the best job they can. And they get results. So it didn't take long before one of the popular ghost hunting shows contacted my friend's team asking to go on a hunt with them.

My friend's excitement turned to disappointed when the producers gave them a list of what they wanted the team to find. A list! How was this to be accomplished? Was my friend supposed to contact the ghosts and shadow people ahead of time to ensure they were free that night?

I recently visited a shadow people website and read comments by a frightened man who had seen an entity outside. Someone on the site warned him that "when they follow you outdoors, they are waiting for an opportunity to kill you." The site owner responded with, "Where did you come up with that bulls..t? Knock it off."

My point here is to implore you to take these television "paranormal entertainers" and paranormal websites with a boatload of skepticism.

Types of Shadow People

Lurkers and watchers

Witnesses often say the shadow person they saw upon awakening appeared to be lurking in the corner of their room, behind a piece of furniture, or partially hidden behind an opened door.

It's never clear why the entity is doing this because most often they don't do anything other than frighten the person who saw them. When seen, they just dart away, pass through a wall, or zip out a closed window.

The usual questions that follow a sighting are:

- What is that?
- Why is it watching me sleep?
- What does it want?
- Will it hurt me?
- Will it come back?
- Will it do something to me next time?
- Will anyone believe me?
- Will it attach to me? (Ghost hunters often wonder if something attached to them during their last investigation. More on this in a moment.)

Menacing shadow people

While some experiencers say they aren't afraid of shadow people, most aren't ashamed to admit they were terrified to see and, in some cases, be touched by an entity in their bedroom. So it's natural that fear can assign a sense of menace and danger to the sighting. That said, it's not a stretch to think shadow entities might indeed have bad intentions.

Their presence begs these often-asked questions.

- Are they here to hurt me?
- Will they hurt my loved ones?
- Where are they from?
- Will they take me there?
- Are there others with them?

Seen briefly, then gone

Experiencers say these types of shadow entities don't seem to be interested in people. They are seen out of the corner of your eye but disappear when you turn to look.

Sometimes, only part of the shadow person is seen, such as the head, the head and shoulders, or just a hand. *A hand!*

Many believe these are from another dimension and somehow were caught briefly in ours. Upon realizing this, the entity corrects its error and disappears.

Seen as a warning

At this point in my research, I have not found evidence of shadow entities warning people of future events. But that doesn't mean it's not possible. First, however, coincidences have to be ruled out.

A person might see a shadow entity and the next day fall down a set of stairs. Are the two occurrences connected? Who knows? One connecting incident is insufficient proof.

Now, if the shadow person points at a set of stairs and shakes his head "no," it's probably best for the witness to find another way down.

Occupying a location

Some locations are well known for their paranormal activity, including shadow entities. Here are just a few.

The Queen Mary ship in Long Beach, California. (My wife and I had some extraordinary paranormal experiences there, but none of them involved shadow people.)

Lawyer Road in Glencoe, Missouri, constructed in 1866. The road is sometimes referred to as Zombie Road because of its long history of paranormal activity, including shadow people.

Hospitals, prisons, and cemeteries. These locations are places of tremendous emotions, violence, and death. The interested reader can Google them with the word "paranormal"—for example, "paranormal prisons"—and find many that have experienced shadow entities.

Places of violence. Fatal accident sites, Civil War battle grounds, beach drownings sites, homicide locations, and many others have reported sightings.

Paranormal investigators believe activity in various locations might be trapped spirits, angry spirits, or spirits with negative intentions. They might not dart away when seen, as some shadow people do, and they might be more likely to attack people.

Can Shadow People Cling to You?

As mentioned earlier, many paranormal investigators' concern is that an entity of some kind, including shadow people, will somehow attach to them. This sometimes happens when investigators spend several hours at a haunted location capturing EVPs (Electronic Voice Phenomenon), orbs, slamming doors, the sound of footsteps, and so on. When they shut down their investigation, pack up, and go to their separate homes, one or more investigators might discover an entity has gone home with them.

My wife and I once investigated a sprawling mausoleum two weeks in a row. We had to cut our second investigation short when both of us were suddenly and intensely affected mood-wise. Lisa became depressed in the extreme, and I was suddenly overcome with intense anger. We carried our moods home, but we were smart enough to sit in the driveway for a long while until whatever it was dissipated. We managed to go to the symphony that night, though we both felt out of sorts.

It's believed by some that shadow entities feed on negative energy emitted by people experiencing dark emotions. People have said when they feel depressed or intensely sad, they often see shadow people. This is similar to what some paranormal investigators say about an uptick of spirit activity in those houses where there is unhappiness, arguments, and deteriorating relationships.

Others report that when they moved out of one house and into a new one, shadow entities went with them. It's the old question: Are places haunted, or are people haunted? There are arguments for both options.

What makes a place haunted? Suppose there are no people to witness activity. How would anyone know there are ghosts, spirits, and shadow people puttering about? They wouldn't. It takes people to see, hear, and feel

activity. For some, this would mean that people are haunted. For others, it merely means the place is haunted, but it takes people to witness it.

Let's just say that both are possible. Shadow people can exist in a location, and sometimes shadow people favor one unlucky person.

The Classic Experience

You are arguably your most vulnerable in your birthday suit in the bathtub or shower. You're also likely to feel somewhat defenseless in bed, relaxed, in your jammies or wearing nothing at all, lights off, in the dark.

The house is settling with a creak here and another one there.

The closet door is open a couple of inches. But you closed it. Or did you? You're tired, and you can't remember.

So sleepy… What a day it was. First, your boss—

What's that shape across the room…?

Oh, it's the standing lamp. Ha. That big shade looks like a big head.

Another creak. That one came from out in the hall. Have you heard creaks from out there before? Can't remember.

A gust of wind outside, and the old apple tree with its bare winter limbs, like fleshless, boney fingers, scratches the side of the house.

You're getting sleepy now.

A screech…

The neighbor's cat again. Wish he'd find a mate and settle down.

Sleepy…

So tired…

Long day…*zzzzzz*

Your eyes snap open.

It's as if something woke you, but you don't hear anything. Why are you feeling such dread? You begin to roll onto your side… You can't. What is…? Your brain is telling your muscles to turn, to move, but your body isn't obeying. Why can't you move? Are you paralyzed?

And why does it feel like there's a tremendous weight holding you down? Pressing you into the bed. It's hard to breathe too.

This isn't good. Your heart is racing; you can feel it pounding against your throat.

Your eyes look around the room. They're the only things you can move. What's wrong with you? Why can't you move your arms, your legs?

In your periphery, the red numbers on your nightstand clock read 2:17. What's that over there… Oh, it's that floor lamp again. It fools you every—

Wait.

What's that in the opposite corner? It's always black in that spot, but it seems…*blacker?* Yeah, like a deep darkness on top of the normal shadow there. That's crazy. How could there be darkness on top—

Did it just move? No, of course not. How could a shadow—

It's moving! No, no, no. How could it be…?

It's coming toward the foot of the bed.

You still can't move.

It looks like a…man. It's shaped like a man, and it's standing there at the foot of the bed. Looking at you.

What does it want?

It's moving again, over the foot of the bed. You can't move. It's moving over your feet, over your legs. You can't…move…

One Weak Explanation

Psychonautwiki.org's homepage describes itself as a community-driven online encyclopedia that aims to document the field of psychonautics in a comprehensive, scientifically-grounded manner.

The author of the page, "Shadow People," writes that shadow entities have been cited as ghosts, omens, demons, aliens, and inter-dimensional time travelers. They mention that the shadow person first appeared in an episode in the popular TV program *The Twilight Zone.* The program aired in 1959 and has been brought back several times over the decades. In an episode called *The Shadow Man,* which appeared in the first series, the entity lives under a character's bed.

According to the author of the article, the show was broadcast nationwide and is still available today in reruns. The author believes it has influenced people. The more the concept and image appear in a culture, he says, the more it establishes itself among people during a profound lack of sleep, when experiencing delirium episodes, and when under the influence of a drug.

The author argues that fear created by mainstream culture, including movies and television, might—*might*—influence negative feelings when seeing such things as shadow people.

The author concludes by saying, “Due to the cultural influence and the perception that shadow people may, in fact, be ‘ghosts,’ people who experience this external hallucination may attribute it to the paranormal or other irrational causes rather than accepting that it is a natural effect of abnormal brain chemistry levels that may stem from a wide variety of mental states. The de-stigmatization of the shadow person experience and rational discussion of their true origin may grant many sufferers relief from the associated stigma of paranoia and mental illness.”

Okay, but why do so many people globally see shadow entities who have never seen *The Twilight Zone* episode?

Things You See Out of the Corner of Your Eyes

People often talk about seeing something out of the corner of their eyes—a human shape or shapeless mass—but when they turn their heads, it’s gone. So was there something there? If so, was it paranormal, a shadow entity?

Here is the conclusive answer: maybe there was, maybe there wasn’t.

We all have peripheral vision. This is a side vision that allows us to see, albeit a tad blurry, those things to our left, right, above us, and below us while we’re looking straight ahead. When we see something out of the corner of our eyes, we’re generally talking about what we saw in our periphery. NBA basketball players probably have the best peripheral vision. This accounts for their seemingly supernatural ability to pass and receive the ball without looking at it.

Besides all of us having peripheral sight, we also have a blind spot—a gap or break—in our vision. Think of that blind spot you have when driving. Even when your slick-talking car salesperson said your new ride doesn’t have one, it more than likely does. And when you’re streaking along on the freeway wanting to change lanes, there is always a vehicle that stays in that blind spot, making you utter words that would make a sailor blush.

Why do you have a blind spot in your eyes?

It’s called a scotoma, an area on the retina void of receptors to respond to light. In short, a blind spot is simply a tiny area within your visual field that comprises no detected vision. This isn’t a physical defect. We all have it.

For the reader who likes things technical: Your blind spot is located about 12–15° temporally, and 1.5° below the horizontal and is roughly 7.5° high and 5.5° wide. Simply said, your blind spot is located on top of your optic nerve inside your eye.

Sometimes your mind fills in what it doesn't know. If you're nervous or anxious—you're home alone on a stormy night or on a ghost hunt in a spooky house—your mind works overtime when your vision can't see all of something. When this happens, it makes that partially visible lamp look like a person, and the darkness in the corner of the room appear to be moving.

But wait. Might it actually be a shadow person in the corner of the room? Might that darkness really be moving? Yes.

Confused yet?

The blind spot is a viable explanation as to why you might detect something in the corner of your eye, only to find it gone when you turn to look. Rather than recognizing an incomplete image, people with scotomas report that things "disappear" when they turn to look.

But do these explanations fit every situation? No. There are still occasions when the answer is beyond the normal, i.e., paranormal.

It's essential before we proclaim an experience paranormal or has a scientific explanation, that we look at other elements surrounding it. For example:

- Have there been other activities in the space?
- Have you seen shadow people in the area on other occasions?
- Have you seen the same thing out of the corner of your eye in different locations?
- Has there been a sudden drop in temperature? This might indicate there is sprit activity in the space.
- Have other people experienced the same thing?
- Is there other evidence that points to the paranormal?
- Is there evidence that indicates it's not paranormal?

Some well-meaning people proclaim, "Oh, I know it was paranormal. I can feel it in my being, in every cell. It was absolutely not of this world."

They might very well feel it, but a sensation doesn't count as evidence that it wasn't of this world. Nor is it evidence when an experiencer's heart

rates accelerates and the fine hairs on their neck stick up. Those are feelings, not proof.

So what's the answer? Sorry, there is no conclusive answer. You're simply left with this:

Don't automatically assume the thing that disappeared out of the corner of your eye is paranormal.

Don't automatically assume the thing that disappeared out of the corner of your eye isn't paranormal.

What Do Shadow Entities Look Like?

Some are described as looking like people, usually male, some with hats, and some with red, yellow, or orange eyes. Others are said to look like shadow shapes or shadow forms, like a black mass, often undulating. They are frequently seen by people in their bedrooms upon awakening, sometimes when they can't move from sleep paralysis.

Others report seeing them outside the bedroom, such as in other areas of the house, and outdoors.

Typically, their appearance falls into these types:

- The shadows might emanate a demonic presence or convey a sense of evil.
- Sometimes, they can pass through objects and walls.
- The figure is seen as male and over six feet tall. Many have said the one they saw was seven feet or taller.
- They either have no eyes or red glowing eyes.
- Because they are solid black, it's impossible to discern clothing, other than occasionally the shape of a hat or cloak. The hats range from a fedora to a top hat.
- Some shadow people react to the person seeing them. Some go away when commanded.
- Some shadow figures appear to have wings.
- They have a mass or solidness to them, as opposed to the flatness seen in regular shadows.
- Some appear to undulate.

- They can be solid, while others are wispy. Some look like swirling smoke.
- They are typically seen as darker than the other shadows and the dark places around them.
- Some witnesses have found that their flashlight beams didn't penetrate their mass.
- Some shadow figures are seen only from their head to their waist; others are seen from head to feet; other people see only the head and shoulders.
- When they exit a room, they usually, but not always, move quickly out a door, disappear into a dark corner, slip inside a closet, disappear behind large objects, or pass through walls or the ceiling.
- Some have been seen to move around objects. The hypothesis is they can't walk through solid objects or don't yet know they can.
- When a person sees them upon awakening, the experience profoundly frightens them. The witness might be haunted by their sighting for years afterward.

What Are They?

Here are a few labels given by witnesses. As discussed earlier, these names are just ideas provided by people who have seen them and others who study the phenomenon. These are only their opinions.

Remember, there are no experts.

Extraterrestrials Those who believe the shadow entities are from outer space say they wear hats to disguise their large alien heads. There is a belief among some that extraterrestrials exist here on Earth but in a different dimension. When people see shadow entities, it's because there was a breakdown in the system, and an alien accidentally slipped through.

Interdimensional beings Believers in this theory say shadow people are from a parallel dimension. This is different than the extraterrestrial just mentioned. Purposefully or accidentally, the interdimensional being somehow overlaps into our dimension and are seen as shadows. This might be why shadow people don't hang around when we see them but instead

quickly dart away. So, do we ever overlap into theirs, and they see us as shadow people?

Ghosts Typically, ghosts depicted in Hollywood movies, talked about in campfire stories, and occasionally caught on camera are described as white and wispy. Might there be another version: dark and wispy? That said, some people say they have seen white shadow people (see below). Those who believe the white ones might be ghosts say they are spirits lost on the plane of the living. Because they haven't accepted that they have passed, they don't yet have the light that people often experience when having a run-in with a ghost or spirit. Without it, they are seen as shadows.

Demons Maybe this theory came about because witnesses have described shadow people with glowing red or orange eyes. There are some accounts of shadow entities rushing toward a paralyzed person, arms outstretched, their entire being emanating evil intent. But this is rare. Usually, the demon label seems to be based on what people feel from the entity, rather than by a particular fiend-like activity.

Harmless These shadows appear, they move from point A to point B, and are gone without frightening anyone to any great extent or in any other way causing harm. Some witnesses say they are no longer frightened because they have seen shadow entities so often without experiencing adverse repercussions.

Terrifying For any number of reasons, these shadows fill witnesses with terror. Most are associated with sleep paralysis, which is immensely frightening in its own right.

Hooded People who have seen hooded shadow figures say they sensed a profound rage emanating from the entities.

Foolers Some people believe there are shadow beings that are nice in the beginning, but this is used as a ploy. The entities are really using their congeniality until they have the witnesses' confidence, then they do bad things.

Part of human nature I couldn't find an explanation for this.

Mirrors A few people believe shadow people come out of mirrors. Some paranormal investigators firmly believe that spirit activity is found in mirrors and have even captured images on video.

Used by the devil People saying this believe Satan controls all evil spirits, including the souls of those who have died.

Shapeshifters They can change to anything they want. One person saw a hooded shadow person turn into a bird.

White Shadow People A few people have reported white shadow people, the same human shape or mass shape as the dark ones.

Indeed, there are lots of thoughts and absolute beliefs on what these entities are and why they are doing what they do. What if shadow entities were all of the things mentioned above?

Here are what some people have experienced.

Karol Krauser Hasegawa

[Karol wrote about his experience with sleep paralysis in Chapter 4. Here he explains his thoughts on the subject from his studies of the metaphysical. He currently lives in Thailand.]

Over the years, I've gotten immersed in various spiritual and occult studies involving past life regression, channeling, and mediumship. I researched and became familiar with the anomaly of sleep paralysis and "bed pinning"—the feeling of a heavy weight pressing down on the torso or the entire body—which happened to me. These gave me more of a point of reference into my first initial episode as a teen.

I continued to experience sleep paralysis, and all that goes with it, in different places all over the world. I can even recall it happening on the Bering Sea in a fishing boat, which means water is apparently not an obstacle. As I write this, I live in Thailand, and I have had an experience

here. If I had to guesstimate how many times that I've had them, I would conservatively say at least a dozen times in the last 35 years.

After that terrifying first episode, most of the others occurred when I'm falling asleep or waking up. Very often, I'm aware of the room and the lights around me. My episodes don't terrify in the extreme anymore, but they are still somewhat frightening. Now I try to relax into them—instead of fighting—to experience further where they will go.

Sometimes, it's as if I'm being lifted up by a giant wave in the ocean, and I'm thinking, *Well, here I am. Let me see where this takes me. I'll just breathe and go with the flow.*

Besides what I have read about sleep paralysis and personally seeing and feeling things, I have developed some theories as to what is happening, though I'm still fairly open about this.

One is that our astral body—which could be defined as our spirit's ability to actually leave our living body—is gone. Our physical one then wakes up without it. Perhaps we are on a different level of consciousness. This makes us more aware of beings on other spiritual planes, which our feeble minds aren't equipped to rationalize. Spiritual planes might be understood as different frequencies or radio stations; they are always present, but we aren't tuned into the channel. But that doesn't mean that they don't exist.

For instance, if you're in a boat floating on the ocean, and you can't see below the surface, that doesn't mean a whole other world doesn't exist there. Once you jump in and swim beneath the surface, a new domain opens up, to include some curious creatures that investigate you, as well. This is a slight comparison of sorts to a spiritual plane.

Perhaps, once we are there, we are open to a different reality. Things come to visit us out of curiosity, or for some other reason. How does one wrap their mind around something outside of our plane of existence? Is it within our reasoning to even comprehend or understand such energies or entities?

Also, it may be that some people give off a different vibration that attracts spiritual beings, almost like a mosquito to light. Many of us have been around such people. They might very well attract things outside of our ordinary understanding.

Our bodies have their own electrical or energy currents and vibrations. Many of them are unique, depending on that person. We have all been

around people who give us different feelings, sometimes not good ones. You might think, “That person gives me the creeps,” or maybe you immediately feel safe around someone.

Often what we feel is that person’s electrical energy or vibration, which is affected by their life experiences, who they are, or often their spiritual practice.

In my reading and studies, I have heard that some people live in two different worlds or realities, a physical one and a spiritual one. This is more common to priests, mystics, shamans, and deep meditators. These individuals are often more open to spiritual visitation and experiences. It’s almost as if their life is centered around opening up more doors of perception on a spiritual level.

These kinds of practices or lifestyles increase the possibility of interacting with or experiencing spiritual entities or energies that others might not always be accessible or understood. Think of it this way: If you can’t hear the music, you can’t dance.

When we look at the term spiritual being, what is it? This is very subjective and could be thought of as an angel, demon, or ghost.

A more neutral way of looking at it could be as an energetic entity, not good, not evil. It’s of a non-physical form but still having energy we humans can identify with and wrap our minds around, without totally losing them.

As time goes on, I welcome these episodes more than dread or fear them. I’m curious about where they might take me and what I might learn or experience from them.

Beth

They aren’t demonic, and they don’t hang around after you wake up. Shadow people aren’t filled with malice, but they do look scary.

Josh

There are various dimensions interacting with ours. Shadow entities are black because the color spectrum modifies as it moves across dimensions. If they didn’t change, we would confuse them with humans.

Phil

Shadow people are the shadows of real people who are having an out-of-body experience. Many people believe we all travel out of our bodies when we sleep. So a shadow person, shadow form, or possibly other entities seen during sleep paralysis are the essence of these nighttime travelers.

People have lots of thoughts on what they see upon awakening. While some of the beliefs might seem quite extreme, in the end, who knows for sure?

Let's take a look at some of the stories sent to me.

Olsen

I was in the Marines and had been some hardcore situations. But the time I awoke in my bunk and saw a shadow figure squatting next to my head and staring at me was one of the most frightening experiences I've ever had.

I've seen it a couple of other times too. Once the shape was huge, like well over six feet tall.

Tom

I awoke in the middle of the night, lying on my left side. I opened my eyes and looked into the face of a shadow person. However, at the time, I thought of it as some kind of a being squatting next to the side of the bed looking at me with yellow eyes.

I couldn't move for several seconds, but when I could, I turned over onto my right side. I laid like that for a little while, then looked back at where I had seen him. The shadow person was gone.

Sophia

[Sophia is an artist living in Australia. As she describes, her experiences began when she was quite young and continued until they ended in 1996.]

Shadow man painted by Sophia.

My first experience of seeing a shadow person was when I was about eight years old. It was nighttime, and I was in my bed. I used to call them nightmares as a kid as I had no idea what shadow people were; I only heard the term three years ago. I saw a huge and tall shadow person outside my window. The figure was of a human-shaped but dark except for piercing red glowing eyes that stared at me, watching. I felt like the entity was bad, and it was there to hurt and harm me.

After staring at me for what seemed like 10 minutes or longer, the shadow person grabbed the window frame and shook it hard enough that it flexed and warped like rubber.

I was frozen, yelling in my sleep until I woke up crying and terrified. This happened about four times a week for six months or so, and each time my mother came into my room and comforted me. Maybe I was experiencing sleep paralysis, but I didn't know there was such a thing at my young age. Even if I were, I can't explain the sightings that I experienced during the day when I was awake.

After six months of these terrifying nights, they stopped.

Hat man painted by Sophia.

My most recent hat man experience was in 1996. I was living alone and was quite ill. I felt tired and sick that day, so I spent most of the afternoon recovering in bed. I wasn't on prescription drugs, I don't drink at all, nor

have I ever taken illegal drugs. I must have eventually drifted off to sleep sometime during the night.

I saw an eight- or nine-foot-tall ethereal human figure float through my bedroom door and into the room. It was a dark shadow that moved like smoke and without touching the ground. It was a human-like figure with those familiar piercing red glowing eyes I had seen as a child. It was wearing a wide-brimmed hat.

It emanated negative energy, and I froze with fear. I tried to yell, but I couldn't make a sound. Eventually, I managed to shout, "Get out! You're not welcome here!"

Now my eyes were open, and I saw the hat man float out of my bedroom door. I got up, switched on the lights, and checked the apartment looking for an intruder.

There wasn't anyone there.

I figured there had to be a logical explanation at the time, but to this day, I don't have a satisfactory one. I would love to know what they are.

Though I haven't seen a shadow person or hat man again, and I know this sounds crazy, but every so often during the night and day, I feel negative energy and a presence.

Bryan

I turn on my CD player at night and listen to soothing new-age music as I drift off. I program it to shut off after 20 minutes. One night, several hours after the player had shut off, I was jarred awake by static coming from it. Then music came out of it for a few seconds. Then silence.

That's when I saw the figure at the foot of my bed.

The entity was really dark, darker than the corners of my room. It was shaped like a man wearing a hat. I couldn't see any detail other than its red eyes. I couldn't look away from him, and I kept praying, "Jesus, make it go away."

He, or it, finally just disappeared. I shook in bed for a long while after.

I wasn't paralyzed, as some people say.

Dean

I experienced shadow people for several years when I was sleeping, beginning when I was under 10 and then later when I was a teen. I was never paralyzed; I'd just wake up and see him, at least I think it was a him. I

know most people say their shadow person was really tall, six or seven feet. But the ones I saw were four feet tall with abnormally large heads. They'd move around very quickly and disappear.

When I was older, I'd see them wearing hats, and I had never heard of the one people call hat man.

Darren

On three occasions, I have awakened to find everything in my bedroom upside down. I'm in bed as I usually am, but everything else in the room is flip-flopped. On two of those occasions, I saw a shadow person watching me, but he wasn't upside down. I'm not crazy, but the experience was.

Katie

Whenever my eight-year-old daughter and I sleep at my mother's house in the same bedroom, my daughter will sometimes slip into bed with me and hug my back. A few nights ago, when we visited my mom, I felt her get into bed and do her usual. I asked her if she would please get up shut off the white noise machine we use when we visit. She got up, and I watched walk across to the windowsill.

But before I fell asleep, I saw a shadow next to her as she stepped over to the window. I don't remember what I thought, but I probably assumed it was shadows made by the outside streetlight. I was just so sleepy.

In the morning, the white noise was still on, and my daughter was in the other bed. I asked her why she didn't turn it off like I asked and come back to bed with me. She looked confused and said she hadn't got up at all last night. I said she got into my bed and hugged me, and I asked her to shut off the white noise. She shook her head like I was crazy, and again said she hadn't gotten up at all during the night, let alone get into bed with me.

When I was fully awake and thought about it with clarity, it dawned on me that the shadow I saw wasn't next to her at all because she wasn't even there. What I saw was just a shadow, not her, and it was moving by the window.

David Allen

"I saw a shadow figure several nights in a row in my bedroom. It was male, I think, average build, if 'build' is the right word, and it was well over six

feet tall. I was awake every time, and each following night it was closer than the night before.

"I've read where some people don't feel a threat from the figure they see, but I did. I felt dread each time it happened, and I kept looking away like a child hiding under his blankets from a monster. Well, it worked because it was gone when I looked back.

I have no idea what it was or why I saw it those times."

Billie

"I've seen a shadow entity three times in my life. It always looks the same: a deep black, darker than the darkest part of my bedroom, extremely tall (I was lying down in bed, but I could still tell that it was tall), and wearing a hat, like a top hat. But the thing that really scared me was his eyes, like red lights that didn't shine out into the room.

"I tried to scream and call out, but I couldn't. I couldn't move either, and it felt like I was being pushed into my bed.

"I closed my eyes, and I prayed really hard for Jehovah to protect me. Pretty soon, I could move, and the shadow thing was gone.

I hope I don't see it ever again."

China

A few years ago, I was sleeping and was awakened by a shadow being sitting on me. I had been sleeping on my back, and he, I think it was male, was sitting on my upper torso. He was so heavy, and it was hard for me to breathe. Just when I thought it couldn't get any worse, he covered my mouth so I couldn't scream out.

All I could do was pray and plead for the Lord to help me. He did, and the shadow being went away.

Ana Balada

When I was little, I'd wake up to see a shadow man come out of a small closet in the wall across from my bed. He wore a long coat, like a man's overcoat, and he wore a hat.

He would come over to the side of my bed and stand over me, holding a club, like he was going to beat me. I'd cry and hide under my covers until it went away.

Years later, I asked my cousin if she had ever seen anything when she slept in my bed after I had left home. She described the exact same thing—a shadow man with a hat. She said he came out of that same closet, stood over her, and looked like he was about to hit her with a club. She was really scared.

Katarina

My boyfriend and I like to explore old cemeteries. We've probably done it two dozen times in the last 18 months, and we've never had a problem. But about two weeks ago, that ended big time.

Rich had to work the night shift, so I was alone in our apartment sleeping, which I've done lots since the two years we've been together. In the middle of the night, around 3 a.m. or so, I woke up feeling this really heavy weight on my stomach and chest. It felt like a big heavy bag, like a duffel bag full of stones. I know that's crazy.

I couldn't move for a few seconds, and I couldn't see anything. When I could finally sit up, I felt hands grab my shoulders and squeeze them hard. They kept squeezing, it really hurt, the hands pushed me back down on the mattress.

I struggled against the weight, but that made it worse. It was so heavy, I could hardly breathe. But I still couldn't see anything, but I could feel a presence with hands on both of my shoulders. Just when I wondered if I might die from fright, the weight was suddenly gone as well as the hands squeezing and pushing my shoulders.

Rich and I wonder if we brought something back from the cemetery.

Tiny

I've had sleep paralysis for years. Sometimes I see shadow people, and sometimes I don't. I've found that if I have the presence of mind to open and close my hands several times, I can break the spell, if that's what it's called.

About a month ago, I got sleep paralysis without seeing anything. I managed to get out of it by opening and closing my hands. But this time, the relief only lasted for a moment before I went right back into it.

Just as I realized I was paralyzed again, a shadow figure appeared along my bed and darted at me. Then it was gone. I have to say that it scared the crap out of me.

Lisa Luna

In 1989, I was 17 and living with a friend and her three children in California. I was a fairly new convert in the Pentecostal church, and I had just gotten home around 11 p.m. from having pizza with a few members. My roommate was visiting her husband in the hospital. I cleaned up the place, checked that all the doors were locked, and turned off the lights, except for the kitchen.

I rarely lay on my stomach when I sleep, but I did for some reason that night. I've never been a good sleeper, and it always takes me a while to drift off.

I began feeling a bit uneasy as if something wasn't right. Then I heard something: not footsteps, not something falling on the floor, not voices. It was more of a feeling. I know, who hears a feeling? But I knew someone was in the house because I could feel it.

Then I could *hear* whatever it was coming toward my room, or maybe I sensed them coming to my room.

I understand shadow people don't make noise, but this one made his presence known. I started to freak out a little, and I called out my roommate's name, thinking she was home. I would learn later that she didn't return that night.

No answer. I called out a second time—again, no answer.

Since I had left the kitchen light on, I could see if someone was coming towards my room.

And I did—a shadow man.

The figure— tall, slender, and wearing a hat—slowly and gracefully passed through my door and into the room. I couldn't see a face. It was just a black presence, a silhouette.

When he got to my bedside, he stood there for a minute. He didn't look directly at me but instead looked down on my bed. During this entire experience, he never looked straight at me.

I was scared. I couldn't speak, let alone yell, scream, or cry. I wanted to, but I was so terrified that I couldn't bring myself to do any of it. I just laid there, watching the shadow figure's every move out of the corner of my eyes.

After a long minute, he turned around and sat on my bed, his weight shifting the mattress a little. He sat there for another long minute, looking

straight ahead. Then he turned his body toward me, leaned down, and put his right arm around my neck as if to choke me.

His head was on top of mine, his presence so powerful. My entire body was trembling, and my teeth were chattering, more and more with each passing second.

His grip tightened…

…and I passed out.

When I awoke, his presence lingered, but I could no longer see him.

When I could collect myself, I managed to call one of my sisters. I told her what had happened, but she chalked it up to dreaming and told me to call my pastor and ask that he bless the house.

But it wasn't a dream. What I saw and what I felt was real.

He was real.

I saw my pastor two days later. We discussed my mother's interest in witchcraft and how my experience likely happened because of it. He said that bad spirits are after me and would follow me around forever. He said that this was the repercussions of witchcraft.

He came to our house later that day and said a few prayers. I moved out of that place shortly after.

Every time I tell the story, it seems like it just happened yesterday. I can still feel the shadow man. Sometimes his presence is powerful, but he never shows himself—though I ask him to.

Heidi Bartlett

[Heidi shares other experiences with shadow people and shadow entities in this book. She is an empath and an investigator with Paranormal Investigators of New England (PI-NE.].

The following events involving shadows and orbs occurred after my boyfriend, Sam, moved in with me.

There were two different orbs. One was about an inch and half in diameter and looked like yellow fire. The other was five inches in diameter and silver.

[Editor's Note: Orbs are controversial among paranormal investigators. Some put great importance on them, while others shrug them off as flying dust particles, insects, or falling rain. The orbs witnessed by Heidi and Sam are unique because of their color.]

We have seen a shadow figure several times. It's light grey and about my height, five feet three inches, but not with jagged edges as usually depicted in drawings. The ones we saw had layered sides as if it were streaking through the room and leaving a residual image in its wake. They always move quickly.

One night, I saw a six-foot-tall white shadow figure standing behind my boyfriend's chair. It just appeared, stood there for a few seconds, and disappeared. Sam looked up and noticed that I was focusing on something, but it was gone when he looked behind him.

Two nights after, I was sitting at a table when I felt something push my thigh into the chair. I startled, but I didn't see anything. I told Sam what had just happened, and a short while my leg bruised where I felt the push.

A week later, my boyfriend discovered scratches on his back. Sam said he noticed them when he got out of the shower. He had no clue how they got there.

Another few days passed, and we were in bed when I felt long fingers touch my upper thighs. I know this sounds strange, but they felt like plastic. It wasn't my boyfriend because he had already rolled onto his back.

On yet another occasion, we both saw a white shadow on our bed's headboard. It was bright white, stretched parallel to the headboard, about 18" inches wide, with circular edges and about the same width as the wall behind it.

Besides the grey shadow figure mentioned above, we have seen other ones moving quickly around the house. These sightings usually happen in the living room, and at different times of the day. The shadows are motionless for a second, and then they are gone. The light grey one I mentioned earlier had more detail than these fast-moving ones. They disappear after we see them.

Corinne

I've experienced shadow people in my bedroom a few times. I don't know what they are any more than the next person, but I wonder why they seem so easily spooked. They scare the crap out of me, but it seems I scare them too.

I've seen them hiding behind my dresser, behind my bathroom door, and in my closet. The shadow figures don't have visible eyes, but my sense of them, coupled with how they hold their heads and bodies, is that they are

looking at me, watching me sleep. But when they see me looking at them, they always dart out the door, window, or into a corner and disappear.

So are they afraid of me too?

Sal

Before I saw a shadow person one night in my bedroom, I had never heard of them. After I saw another one several months later, I searched online. I discovered that people see them all over the world. I wonder what the percentage is of people who see something but never tell anyone for fear of being called a weirdo.

Apple

I began seeing them at night in my bedroom. They didn't have eyes, and I could feel something menacing coming from them. I told a friend about it, and she said they feed off people's fear and anxiety. She said to try not to be afraid, stay calm, and to tell it to go away. That was just a few weeks ago, and I haven't seen one since I've been working on controlling my fear.

I hope it continues to work.

Dotty

Before I started leaving my bedroom lights on, I would see two shadow people, sometimes three. They were all different heights, just standing near the foot of my bed. Other times in my room, one would be off to my right and the other to my left.

Can Animals See Shadow People?

Scientists say that darker than dark shadow man you see in the corner of your bedroom when you awaken, unable to move or scream, is a result of sleep paralysis. But why does your pet tremble, growl, and stare so intensely at where it stands watching you sleep?

National pet charity Blue Cross conducted a poll of 1,362 people that disclosed the following:

- 88 percent of pet owners believe animals can see things they can't.
- 63 percent of them believed their animals had already seen ghosts.
- 37 percent said their dogs barked at an empty space in a room.

- 36 percent said their animals had stood frozen in shock, seemingly seeing something only visible to them.

When I was a child, our cat would sit in our living room while everyone read, and slowly turn its head, as if following an invisible presence moving across the open space.

Author Peggy Schmidt in her 2009 book *Tails of the Afterlife,* tells of a woman who passed away, leaving seven dogs and six cats. Witnesses say that after her death, the animals would gather in one place every day in the house. The cats would purr and arch their backs for a rub, some of the dogs stretched out on their backs to get their tummies stroked, while others wiggled with excitement. Then all of them would sit at attention and stare at the air for a moment before they went back to whatever they had been doing earlier.

Ryan Neile, Senior Animal Behaviorist at Blue Cross, said that there is much we don't know about our pet's senses—smell, eyesight, and hearing—and how they perceive the world with them. She said, "Their physical reactions may include pupils dilating, bodies tensing, hair standing on end, dogs may growl, and cats may hiss. They may hold their ground, or they may run away."

An article in Animalplanet.com, "Can dogs sense the supernatural?" author unknown, is slanted toward not believing in a supernatural connection between pets and the paranormal. The author writes that your pet's supposed ability to perceive things humans can't is because of the animal's exceptional smell, hearing, and sensitivity to even the smallest movements that we humans can't detect. The author notes that dogs' senses are keener than ours. Its eyes can detect the minutest of movements, its sense of smell is between 1000 and 10,000 times greater than human's, and it can hear higher frequencies four times farther away than humans.

The article notes that both wild and domestic animals displayed distress just before the ocean tsunami in 2004.

Several years ago, I was writing on the computer early in the morning when Chipps, my extraordinarily cute Schnauzer dog, suddenly jumped out of his bed and looked around in total panic. In less than 10 seconds, my house began to shake. I picked him up and bolted into my backyard, where the trees were swaying as if in a windstorm. Chipps knew the earth was about to move several seconds before I did.

So do we accept as gospel the official comments on animalplanet.com to mean our pets don't have paranormal detection abilities? Well, I don't. As always, scientists want proof shown in studies. But until they figure out a way to do it (and good luck with that), we have to go by anecdotal and video evidence.

August

I live in an apartment with Fluff, my adorable tabby. But she's not so adorable when she's scaring me. She often reacts to things I can't see and does it in a way that is quite frightening.

Sometimes there's a shadow-like thing that moves along one wall in my living room. Fluff will play with it—hop sideways at it or swat the wall—but other times, she hisses and growls. Two times she's growled when looking at something behind me. When I turn around, there is nothing there.

Gracie

My husband and I have two dogs. We both have had experiences with seeing shadow people during the night.

Both dogs are continually seeing something on the ceiling or behind us. They bark at whatever it is, and their hair raises up. It's very scary when they alert on something behind us, but there isn't anything there when we turn around.

Ferris

When I was young, no older than seven, I awoke in the middle of the night to feel something dark on my chest and two bright white eyes looking down at me. It was like the eyes had their own light.

I remember screaming bloody murder until my mother came to check on me. She calmed me and said it was a cat sitting on me. I remember the neighbor had a dog, but I don't remember us having a cat.

Even if we did, how would its eyes light up like that? My room was on the second floor, and there were no outside lights to shine into the windows.

I remember being hysterical with fear.

Bart

My granny has suffered from sleep paralysis for a long time and seeing the so-called shadow man. We didn't know it was a thing until we read about it online three years ago.

Her shadow man wears a hat, which makes him hat man, I guess. Sometimes when she sees it, her cat runs into her bedroom and chases it away. I mean, it literally goes after it and chases it until it disappears.

Bruce

My mother has had three sightings of shadow man in her bedroom. always in the same corner. Her Doberman won't go near the corner. He always stops short and just looks at it without moving, even in the daytime.

Andrew

I have sleep paralysis off and on. Henry my dog always sleeps with me and never reacts; at least I've never noticed him responding to what I'm seeing. Maybe Henry does, but I'm so focused and scared that I don't notice what he's doing.

But I recently had a stranger than normal experience with a shadow man, and my dog did react. When I woke up paralyzed, the shadow man was crawling on top of me. I tried to cry out, but nothing came out of my mouth. Henry was next to me, and I could hear him growling.

I struggled against the shadow man's weight, and when I forcefully flipped onto my side, it rolled off me. I think I heard it land on the floor, but I'm not sure.

This time Henry barked like crazy. When I turned back around, the shadow was gone, but Henry kept barking for a few more minutes.

Your Animal's Behavior

Animal experts say the following list is an example of your cat or dog using their heightened sense of smell, sight, hearing, taste, and sensitivity to vibration. Fine, but might these also indicate your animal is perceiving something paranormal, such as a shadow entity?

You decide.

- Your animal barks, hisses, meows, and startle-jumps at things you can’t see or hear.
- Your gut tells you something is going on in your house, and your animal reacts to it in some manner.
- Your animal abruptly acts frightened—hissing, yelping, trembling, running off, or coming to you for comfort.
- Your animals consistently and timidly check out the same location in your house.
- You hear or see something, and your pet snuggles next to you and stares in the same direction as you.
- Your animal intently stares at a closed door, an open door, a closet, or the corner of a room without looking away.

CHAPTER 6

SHADOW PEOPLE OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM

People see shadow entities when they are wide awake and outside their homes too.

Seeing Shadow People When You're Awake

You might think that it can't get any worse than waking up paralyzed and seeing a shadow entity move away from a dark corner in your bedroom and creep toward your side of the bed. Well, it can.

Some people see shadow entities when they're wide awake.

But wait. Doctors and scientists tell us those shadow entity sightings are just part of the sleep paralysis when your brain awakens before your body does. So what are they saying about sightings that aren't associated with sleeping? It appears that they aren't saying anything, although there is plenty of anecdotal evidence.

Those who tell their story are frightened and struggling to understand. But how many more don't tell anyone for fear of being ridiculed?

Here are a few experiencer statements.

Cathi A.

I have never seen a shadow form in my bedroom or at any other time when sleeping. But I saw one when I was awake.

I had been up for about two hours, and I was sitting on my deck working on my taxes. At one point, I looked up and saw the figure standing at the end of the deck by the garage. The man-shaped shadow was dark, and it appeared to be watching me.

I startled, and I screamed too. The figure turned around fast, darted around the garage—and was gone.

Nanette

I was in my home office skyping with my boss, who was at a convention in another state. I had a small desk light on that lit up my face and upper body. We had been talking for about 30 minutes when he suddenly looked startled. I asked him what was wrong, and he said he saw something behind me. We talk a lot on skype, and he knows I live alone.

He said, "I just saw a shadow of someone behind you. It came right up behind you and then dropped down."

He said it startled him, but it scared the crap out of me.

Ben

I work at a health club. I went into my office on a Sunday afternoon to catch up on some paperwork. I had the room to myself.

While I was working, movement out of the corner of my eye made me look up to see a shadow in the form of a man at least six feet tall. He came through the doorway, moved down the aisle past me, and went out another doorway.

I wasn't scared at the time, and I don't know why. It was bold, black, and human-like. It didn't acknowledge me, and I didn't see it again. Maybe it didn't bother me because the atmosphere wasn't spooky, like in a dark house, but it was still strange.

Later, after I got home, it sunk in, and I shook like a leaf.

Heidi Bartlett

[Heidi is a crew member with Paranormal Investigators of New England (PI-NE). Her other stories are found elsewhere in this book.]

I have encountered many shadow forms that usually just dart away and disappear. Sometimes I've seen them in front of me, other times out of the corner of my eye.

I've experienced both positive energies from them and negative. Most of the positive ones have been in my home, an in-home daycare for a while. The first experience occurred right before I joined PI-NE.

I could hear a female singing or humming. Sometimes it sounded nearby, other times, distant. On one occasion, one of the daycare kids and I stood outside a closed door listening to the female hum. The little girl asked if I could hear her too. When I opened the door, the humming stopped, and the room was empty.

For a while, there was what I would call a caring spirit in my bedroom while I slept. It would sit on the edge of my bed, and I could feel it with my foot. Other times when I was asleep, I could feel a hand on both my forehead and leg.

Another occurrence happened outside my home. A preschooler and I walked by a cemetery across from my house when we heard a male voice say, "Hey."

I consider these positive energy spirits.

But on two other occasions, they weren't.

I was walking around a corner to go into the playroom where the kids were when I was stopped by a mass of undulating black moving upwards towards the ceiling. It was dense on the bottom, but as it rolled upward, it

became more see-through. Other parts, and I know this sounds like an odd description, were like parchment paper that lines a baking sheet and has splotches of oil.

I became angry that this shadow-like entity was so close to the children.

To not frighten them, I mentally "yelled" at the mass to get out and never come back. I'm empathic to the spirit world, and I know they can speak and hear me.

It reacted to me by shrinking back towards the floor. It was as if I had startled it. Then for just a moment, it became very dense in its blackness, then it shot off to the left and disappeared.

Thank goodness the kids hadn't seen it.

More from Heidi Bartlett

[In this story, the names and locations have been changed to protect the privacy of others wishing to remain anonymous.]

Sally, a member of another team of paranormal investigators, had branched out on her own to conduct investigations and healing in places where she discovered negative and demonic paranormal activity. Working with Sally always took unexpected and out of the ordinary turns. She has psychic/mediumship abilities, and she is a minister. She understands the paranormal on a deeper level than most and is not afraid to go up against the demonic.

Sally would start an investigation by asking the client questions while quietly meditating to see what types of spirit energy was nearby and draw them out. In a house cleansing, Sally would place oil above doorways and windows and sprinkle salt across thresholds while speaking prayers.

Most people don't realize how powerful spirit energy can be. I have witnessed increased paranormal activity on several occasions with Sally. For example, a team member was burned on one. On another, a client became frantic, and I was incapacitated and couldn't assist her. For that matter, I couldn't even get close to her or to the bible she was holding.

Whenever I investigated with Sally, even the most basic case would turn out to include a possession. For instance, I became possessed during the first investigation I did with her.

Before it started, Sally anointed the team with blessed oil and asked if we believed in God and if we forsake all evil. While she said prayers and anointed everyone, I noticed spirit energy at the top of the stairs. By the time Sally got to me for anointing, I didn't understand anything she was saying to me, and I felt like I was about to pass out.

In another case with Sally, the entity was so intelligent that it took many years to remove the energy from the home. In the end, the owners had to sell the house and move.

Over time, Sally was targeted by negative and demonic entities due to all the healing and removal she tried to do. This completely ruined her life.

Her final attempt to seek help from the director of another paranormal investigation group that, in turn, reached out to me to join them.

It had been some time since I had seen Sally, and I was shocked at her appearance. She was nearly an unrecognizable shell of her former self. The team director and I determined that whatever was happening to her was beyond our abilities as paranormal investigators. So we contacted a Wiccan who was known for clearing negative energy and cleansing homes.

[The definition of Wiccan is quite involved. The interested reader is encouraged to Google the term.]

The energy I felt that night was more potent than anything I had experienced before. At one point, I started to become enraged when the Wiccan explained how he was going to drive away whatever was there. But I could hear an entity yelling angrily inside my head that it would take more than that to get rid of it.

I had to leave the room and stood out in the hallway, pacing, shaking, and close to tears. Spirit energy, especially negative ones, takes a lot out of me. I walked and fanned myself as if trying to get fresh air because I felt like I couldn't breathe. The negative energy in that apartment was overwhelming to me. I don't know how Sally lived with it day in and day out; I couldn't.

The following night I was sitting on my couch watching TV when a shadow, blacker than night, appeared halfway between me and the television. I could tell by the shape that it was male, about six-feet-tall, with narrow shoulders.

It was looking at me.

It emanated the same energy I felt in Sally's apartment. I sensed that the shadow entity was checking up on me. I yelled that I would no longer

help, and I would take myself off this case.

But the shadow reappeared the following night, and again it felt like it was checking up on me. I yelled at it, saying I was not going to help Sally anymore. Afterward, I realized I was telling this demonic entity that I would no longer be of help to people if it meant it would come back.

This was the wrong way to think. I should never turn my back on humanity just to keep a demonic entity away.

Colleen

[The following story is from my book *Cops' True Stories of the Paranormal*. At the time of this incident and another she tells in the book, Collen worked hospital security. She went on to a career in police work.]

I worked security at two local hospitals before I became a police officer. One of my many duties was to oversee conditions in the basement morgue. It made me a little nervous at first. But it helped that the job was simple: check the temperature of the room every few hours, transport the deceased from their hospital rooms to the morgue, and process paperwork.

One night when I was still new, my superior said I had earned my stripes and was ready to work by myself. She advised me that officers at shift change had lodged two bodies in the morgue.

After completing my indoor patrol, I headed down to the basement to make a morgue check. The architects must have had a sense of humor because they had enhanced the creep factor by designing the hallway that led to the cold room to be dark and maze-like. Once inside, I checked over the "body roster," opened the heavy door to the walk-in cooler, and—froze in place.

Something was inside with the two bodies.

It was a dark shadow figure, six-feet-tall, yet I could see through it. It was bending over one of the bagged bodies.

I remained motionless except for the goosebumps spreading over my arms. And I was suddenly cold, more than the cold temperature in the cooler.

Seconds passed before I could shut the cooler door and rush out of the morgue, locking the outer door securely behind me. Shocked and in disbelief of what my eyes had truly seen, I hurried down the hall to distance myself from that room.

Because I was new and didn't know my supervisor well, I decided not to say anything. But after a few weeks of getting comfortable with her, I took a chance and described what I had seen that night. After my story, she smiled, then laughed. Does she think I'm crazy? I wondered.

"Don't worry," she said. "You'll have plenty more experiences like that working in this place." Then she added these words.

"Understand this, a hospital is a gateway between the living and the dead. We've all had things happen to us here."

Robert K. Williams

[The following excerpt is from *Deconstructing a Paradigm; A Treatise for the Unbelievable,* by Robert K. Williams]

I was raised in a home that had a large, furnished living room in the basement. It served as a common area for my family, where we hung out and watched TV. One night, when I was about 11 years old, I was watching TV with my family when I decided to go to bed.

My bedroom was just a few paces from the basement living room. My door was open, and my bedroom lights were off, though dim light seeped in from the living room.

As I entered, I was stopped mid-stride by the sight of someone sitting in the chair that faced my TV-Nintendo setup next to my bed.

It appeared to be a man, which I based solely on his stature. There was no texture or detail to him; he was simply a dark shadow wearing a hat. His eyes didn't glow red, which I know is often the case.

I just looked at him, trying to interpret what I was seeing. Was he really there?

Then he moved.

He raised his left arm, the Nintendo controller in his hand, and held it out toward me as if offering me my turn on a one-player game. That is when it became clear that I wasn't misreading the situation. He—*it*—really was there.

I didn't perceive an air of menace or evil, but still, he wasn't supposed to exist, especially in my room.

I fled back out into the living room, sat, and said nothing.

Though many who struggle with sleep paralysis have multiple experiences, I witnessed this hat man only once. And to reiterate, I wasn't

sleeping when it happened; I was in the process of going to bed. I wasn't in it, and I was in no way falling asleep or waking up.

My sighting wasn't an airy intangible spirit. It was materially present in our dimension, as evidenced by its ability to interact with matter—it offered me a Nintendo controller.

Perhaps it was a benevolent entity that sought nothing more than to facilitate the joy that Nintendo brings every little boy. Or, more likely, it had observed that I became angry and particularly blasphemous whenever I played video games that didn't go my way. At any rate, this thing had no proper self-awareness. What child would take anything offered by a monster?

Perhaps it was just optimistic or didn't know it was a monster.

Although it was real enough for me at the time, at some point, probably soon after, I came to suspect that it was likely the result of my imagination. It wasn't until about 20 years later that I learned many other people claim to have witnessed a shadow figure wearing a hat. That is when I began to lend validity to the memory after all.

Before learning that others had witnessed something similar, I made excuses for what I had seen: I was tired, the room was dark, and so on. But I had never heard of anything like the so-called "hat man."

How could I imagine what I didn't know?

I've heard two others speak of their shadow person experiences in the same manner as I had. They had lived their lives believing their experience had been a figment of their imagination. One of these people still holds to that idea today. The other, like me, upon hearing the accounts of others who shared the same specific details, realized that it was no imagination at all.

Statistically, it couldn't have been.

If the hat man incident was authentic, then what else might have truly occurred that I disregarded as imagination?

Sightings in Forests

"Forest shadow people" are sometimes called "shadow stalkers."

They are seen in woodlands where they move about without making the usual sounds that living people do—crunching over twigs and leaves and brushing their way through branches. People say they seem to be

watching them hike, hunt, or play. The shadow figures move, stop, and move again as the witnesses do.

No one has reported being harmed by the forest shadow people. They simply appear to be following and observing.

Some people believe they are protectors of the forests. Others think they might live among the trees because it's where they died when they lost their way. A minority of people believe they might be real people but from another dimension. Somehow (we discussed this earlier), the crossover makes them appear to the living as shadow entities.

Douglas

I had never heard of a shadow person, hat man, or any other kind of shadow thing. So when I saw one on a hiking trail, it confused me. Later, when I thought about it more, it scared me.

I was hiking a trail in Colorado, walking by myself up a medium incline among trees. At one point, I looked up to see something about 75 yards ahead of me coming my way. At first, I couldn't clearly make out what I was seeing. It was black, like a moving shadow. Then as I got closer to it, I could see that it was indeed a shadow, and it was moving in my direction on the trail.

The closer it got, the more I could see that it was shaped like a human, a male. I couldn't tell if it was looking at me or looking down at the trail where it was going. It was moving at about the same speed as I was. In less than a minute, we would be close enough to meet.

Later, I'd think about it and wonder why I wasn't afraid, but at the time it was happening, I wasn't.

A few seconds later, we passed each other. All I could conclude was that it was a shadow-like human form, and it had no discernible features. I continued on for a few strides before I looked back. The trail was empty. There were no curves or sharp turns at this point.

The thing was simply gone.

Shadow Animals

As we struggle to know if shadow people are aliens, ghosts, astral travelers, or beings from another dimension, we also must consider what shadow animals are. As usual, we get the absolutes from people claiming shadow

animals are demons, ghosts, omens, and so on. But in the end, their origin, purpose, and objective are as unknown as those of shadow people.

There are many anecdotes from children who report seeing a variety of shadow critters, especially dogs, cats, chickens, snakes, and rabbits. It's easy to write these incidents off as the stuff of the young ones' imaginations, enhanced by the types of books and stories they read and hear.

But is everything they claim to see part of their imagination? What about the long-held belief that young children connect to the paranormal more easily than grownups? As with everything on this subject, we need to keep an open mind and not jump to conclusions.

Here are a few sightings by grownups.

Colin

I was working in my yard when I saw a shadow shaped sort of like a dog, a middle-sized one, run across the yard and disappear as it approached a tree. I was standing there going, What the hell?

My neighbor was just getting out of his car when he saw it. He called over to me, asking what that thing was.

He said he could see through it.

Dennis

Since I moved into my apartment, I have had seen shadow cats, or maybe it's just one, on several occasions. Most of the time, I see it darting through the room or sitting peacefully and contemplating whatever cats think about.

On one occasion, it appeared to crouch down as if to spring and attack something. I stamped my foot on the floor real hard, and it startled, just like a real cat would, and then bolted off and disappeared as it passed through a door.

Dawn

I've seen my real-life cat play with a shadow cat in my dining room. My live cat chases it around the table, on the chairs, and back down onto the floor. I'm not really scared, but it is weird.

Cory

I thought I was crazy because I see shadow spiders on the wall only to disappear a moment later, and I'm looking at them the entire time. I checked on the Internet and discovered that lots of other people see them too. Why are so many people seeing experiencing this?

I hate spiders enough as it is.

Sonny

I was in my kitchen last week when movement below my eye level made me look down. It was a spider. There was nothing remarkable about its body that I can recall, other than its legs were quite long.

It skittered quickly across the floor—but without touching it with its "feet." Instead, it moved about two inches above it, heading toward a wall. As it got close, the spider disappeared. It wasn't like it ran out of my sight behind something, but rather it just ceased to exist in plain view. One moment it was moving fast. But when it was about 12 inches short of the wall, it was no longer there.

I looked all over for it, but there wasn't anywhere it could have gone. It just disappeared into thin air. It definitely wasn't an eye floater, as a friend mentioned. I had those several years ago.

Eye floaters don't have long bent legs and skitter.

Judy Kim

I was driving with my father one night. It was nearing midnight, and we were in this rural area. A dog-shaped shadow suddenly dashed out of a ditch, ran across the dirt shoulder, and out onto the two-lane street. Just as it reached halfway across where the white dividing line would have been, had there been one, it disappeared. I mean, just like that, it was gone.

My father saw it happen too.

Milli

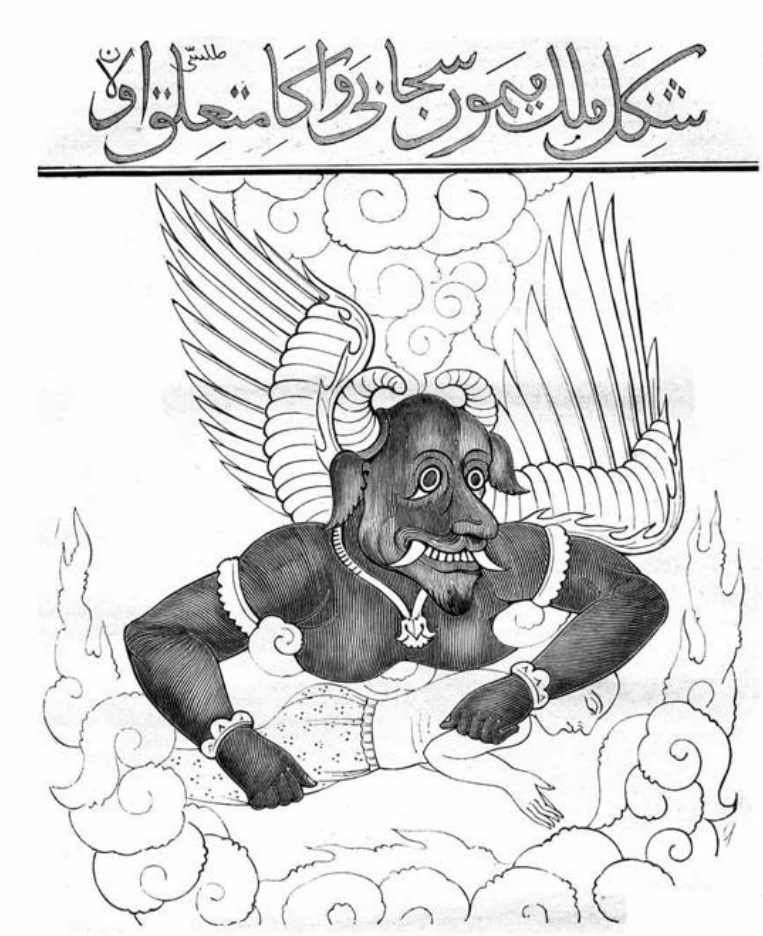
There have been three times when I've seen shadow animals in my house. The shapes weren't exact, but I'd bet on them being a dog, or three different ones, all with a tail. I wouldn't know for sure if they were the same one each time.

They would run across the living room when I was sitting and reading. Sometimes the shadows disappeared before they got to the hall. Other times

they continued down it and then disappeared.

Yes, it scared me each time. It was so unexpected.

DJINN or JINN



According to the Encyclopedia Britannic, in Arabic mythology, jinni (singular), jinn (plural), also called genie and djinn, are supernatural spirits below the status of angels and devils. They can appear as human, animal—and a human-shaped shadow. It was also believed they could possess humans.

They were originally spiritual beings born from a hot, smokeless fire, sometimes referred to as “essential fire.” Angels, on the other hand, were formed of light, while man was created from clay.

At one point after djinns' creation, they were caught eavesdropping on the angels. As punishment, they were evicted and banished to Earth, where they inhabit an invisible parallel realm to our own.

Many people say that visitations by shadow people are on the rise (they don't say how they know this) and conclude that djinn is responsible. Those who take this idea a step further, argue that djinn wants to restore their supremacy over the Earth, as was the case many millenniums ago.

Evil tempters

It's said that every person has a djinn with them at all times, leading them astray to do evil in some fashion. (Given the state of the world these days, this belief might not be too far off.) Then when the corrupted person dies, their djinn is free at last to journey the Earth doing whatever.

Inter-dimensional beings

People who study the djinn phenomenon speculate they are inter-dimensional beings. As such, they can cross time and space. They enter our world through inter-dimensional portals, and then in the form of shadow beings, infiltrate homes, and other locations. Believers say they visit people around the world to revenge them for taking their place on Earth.

Philip J. Imbrogno, the author of *Files from the Edge,* believes shadow beings are really djinn trying to cross from their world into ours. He writes, "As they press up against the membrane that separates the two realities, we perceive them as a shadow image." He goes on to say, "Therefore, we should pay very close attention to all these reports."

Crazy? Maybe, maybe not. Don't cultures shake their heads when hearing the "crazy beliefs and customs of other religions? Are they all wrong? Some of them? Half a dozen, maybe? Or might they all have a little right in them? Or might they all have a little crazy in them?

Genie

Djinn, it is said, can grant wishes, hence the Anglicized word of djinn, "genie." Those humans who get the opportunity to make a wish must be careful to word it carefully. This is because djinn likes to interpret desires literally—sometimes painfully.

“Djinn, I wish for a hundred bars of gold.” *Poof,* the wisher gets a 100, 12-pound bars of gold dropped on his skull.

Some Muslims firmly believe that djinn is real. They attribute all types of paranormal activities, such as demons, fairies, ghosts, and aliens, to djinn in disguise. Some believe so intensely, they execute people they deem inhabited by djinn. This isn’t unlike the witch hunts in early modern Europe and America.

David Morehouse

David Morehouse is a highly decorated Army officer, special operations infantryman, and elite Airborne Ranger Company Commander. Wounded by machine-gun fire during a training mission, Morehouse began to have inexplicable visions and haunting nightmares, which would redirect his military career and land him in the government’s top-secret Stargate Program, which involved experimentation of remote viewing.

For nearly two decades, the United States military intelligence community delved into the dark world of psychic espionage. They recruited a team of psychic spies to serve as “remote viewers,” individuals who used their paranormal gifts to transcend time and space and uncover the highly guarded military secrets of other nations. (Information gathered from Morehouse’s biography on Amazon.com.)

In his book *Psychic Warrior,* Morehouse tells of a time when he was stationed in Jordan in a bleak valley called Baten el Ghoul, which translates to “Belly of the Beast.” It has been said that the valley is inhabited by demons and ghosts. In fact, Jordanian soldiers reported seeing demons stalking about and attacking people.

Morehouse writes, “Sometime in the night, my eyes opened to a surreal light outside the tent. It was like the light of an eclipsed sun and wasn’t coming from any stove. It filled the night sky. The entire Baten en Ghoul and the hills beyond were bathed in the strange bluish-gray light.

“I walked to the edge of the bluff and stared into the valley. Dark figures moved effortlessly across its floor, like apparitions. They poured from the rocks in various heaps and shapes and moved about the clusters of tents. I could hear muffled cries from the Jordanian encampment, and momentarily I thought we were being overrun by thieves or Israelis.

“Panicked, I turned to run for help. Colliding with one of the figures, I reflexively closed my eyes, except I didn’t collide. I walked right through it.

Turning around, I watched the figure disappear over the edge of the bluff."

Djinn?

Whatever the djinn is or isn't, they remain part of the cultures and traditions of many countries, and they are real to many people. If they are mere superstitions and creations of the mind, what is it that people like Dr. Morehouse and soldiers witnessed when they had never heard of such a thing?

CHAPTER 7

ALIENS

As if waking up to see shadow people at the foot of your bed isn't bad enough…

Many people who have reported alien abduction experience early morning sleep paralysis. As they lie motionless and terrified, they might experience:

- shadow beings
- bright flashing lights
- hear sounds, such as voices, whirring, pulsating
- feel and see themselves floating above their room

Psychologists are quick to explain that these people are hallucinating, recalling false memories, prone to fantasy, and are susceptible to suggestion and leading questions during hypnosis. Psychologists also suggest that those who believe they have been taken are influenced by movies, TV programs, and books depicting alien abduction. This is why the descriptions of what occurs during the abduction are so similar.

Scientists have lots to say about experiencers' when they tell of being physically taken. But I couldn't find any comments from scientists about what people say happened—with evidence—*after* an abduction, such as:

- loss of time
- awakening in a different location
- wearing different clothing, wrong size, dirty, and sometimes worn backward
- visible marks on their bodies
- chips planted under their skin

Connection To Shadow People And UFO Cloaking Ability

Some people believe there is a definite connection between aliens and shadow people. Certain UFOlogists (people who study UFOs) ponder the possibilities that aliens might have the ability to make themselves invisible. A bizarre thought? Maybe. But more and more UFOligists say that sightings captured on video show that unidentified objects can do precisely that.

MUFON, the Mutual UFO Network, is an investigative and research organization run by U.S. citizens. MUFON maintains a roster of field investigators for each state in the U.S. and also has some representatives in foreign countries. It's the only UFO organization in the U.S. of any size with active field investigators who work with people who report UFO sightings to them. The investigator's task is to help them figure out whether they have seen something unknown or their sighting is a known object, that is, an IFO (Identified Flying Object).

Former pilot's experience reported to MUFON

[This story can be found on MUFON's website]

The witness—a former pilot and NASA employee—was flying American Airlines flight 3996 Houston to Chicago on June 1 in 2018. He was photographing storm anvils to use as desktop wallpaper.

He says, "Our flight was at about 36 to 38,000 feet. Immediately after taking three pictures in about 10 seconds, the craft appeared suddenly to the east of our flight path at about 50,000 feet from [out of] nowhere as if [in] some *Star Trek* 'de-cloaking' scene."

The witness immediately snapped another photo, capturing an image of the craft, at what the witness guessed was about 58,000 feet. He said, "Three seconds later, the craft went ballistic to the south ascending." He said the sun was west of the airplane and was not interfering with the camera, window, or in any other way with the visual.

My experience in the military

I mentioned in the Introduction that in 1969, my Army missile base in Florida, set on the edge of the Everglades, dealt with UFOs for several months. One evening, my MP partner and I spotted two objects directly overhead. How high? I don't know as they were just two lights—much larger and brighter than the most prominent star—moving about in the midnight sky. I called my duty officer to report it, and he, in turn, called Homestead Air Force Base on the mainland. In less than five minutes, two jets were screaming toward the lights.

The jets passed directly overhead. In their wake—empty sky.

I have often talked about my multiple UFO experiences in Florida in interviews over the years. I've always concluded the UFOs in this instance must have shot straight up out of sight as the two jets streaked toward them. I said this, despite not seeing them move upward and diminish in size and brightness, as would be the case.

At that time in 1969, I didn't know there were other possibilities, nor did I even consider it. All I knew for sure was that one moment the UFOs were there, and in the next, they were gone.

So if a craft can disappear, might it be possible that a being from it can also appear and disappear as it deems necessary? Why not? Many pundits believe invisible aliens are among us now.

Taking this one step further, might an invisible alien still have mass and appear as a shadow entity?

(Am I starting to sound like those narrators on the *Ancient Aliens* TV shows on *The History Channel*?)

Why do so many people who see a shadow person sense that the entity isn't human? Does the large number of experiencers sensing the same thing add credence to the prospect?

These are all thought-provoking bits and pieces to factor in when considering the possibilities of the shadow people phenomenon.

Is it all in our minds?

A woman awakens, unable to move. She sees an entity come into her bedroom, sometimes through the walls or windows. She is levitated, floated out of the room, and taken to another location.

Some scientists believe that movies and TV programs might play a role in people thinking they have been abducted by aliens. Debunkers argue that reports similar to my example are more widespread in the United States, where UFO- and alien-themed TV programs and movies are popular. Might they inspire the imagination? Might they add elements to the usual sleep paralysis experience? Such as:

- the awakened one is unable to move.
- the awakened one can't call out for help.
- an entity enters the room through a closed door.
- the awakened one feels someone or something grabbing them.
- the awakened one senses or sees the entity moving toward them.
- the awakened one feels as if they are being crushed.
- the entity can appear and disappear instantly.

I interviewed Les Velez, one of the co-founders of OPUS (Organization for Paranormal Understanding and Support) for my book *Seekers of the Paranormal.* Among other things, the organization works with people who believe they have been abducted. I asked him to describe a typical claim of abduction.

"People are generally abducted at night," he says. "They are taken through a closed window or a wall. Some remember being taken up in a beam of light, while others have no recollection of being taken aboard a craft and into a round, bright room. Those who do remember, say they were

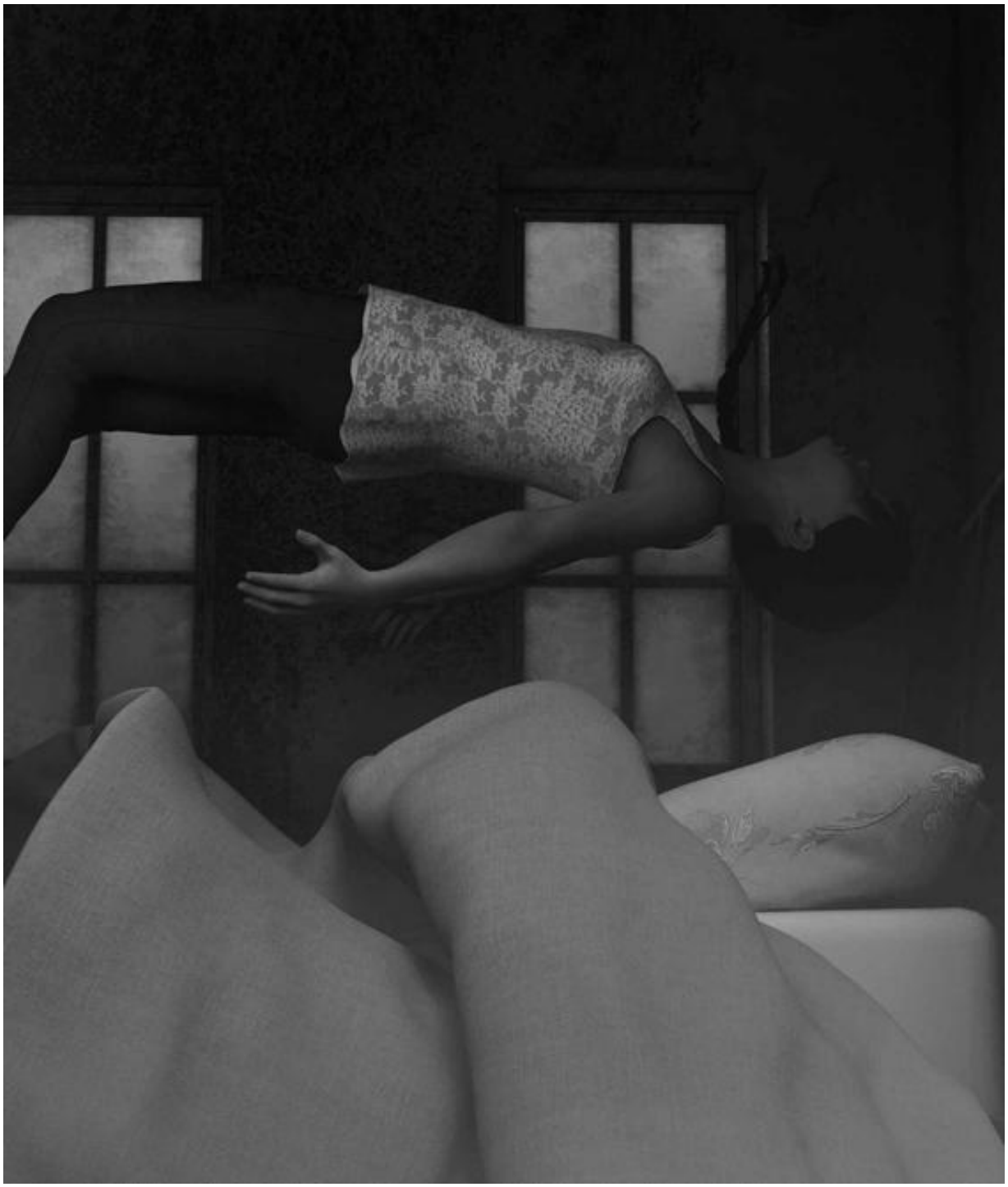
placed on a metal table, nude, and probes were put into various cavities. Sperm and eggs were taken.

"They are often shown a video of things to come if we don't change our ways. It's common for abductees to come away with a different world view such as we need to be better to one another, not pollute our water and air, and stop all wars.

"[Abductees] have no memory of returning to Earth but find that their clothes are either not theirs, turned inside out, or incorrectly dressed in some other way. Sometimes there are stains on the clothing and dirt around their beds."

So might some of these accounts be, in fact, part of the imagination, which is a byproduct of sleep paralysis? Yes. Might some accounts give credibility to an actual alien abduction claim? Also, yes. There are lots of incredible evidence that points at the latter.

Consider the following account.



Many abductees report that they were floated up above their beds and out of their home.

Westcoast of the United States

The following incident is an excerpt from my book *Seekers of the Paranormal*. It's taken from an interview with a person we will call "Kathy," conducted by OPUS (Organization For Paranormal Understanding and Support.

Kathy and her boyfriend, Tom [not his real name], a park ranger, were driving back to his residence at 4:45 in the afternoon. The weather had been clear and pleasant, so the couple was surprised at how quickly fog moved in and shrouded their vehicle. The Pacific Ocean is known for its sudden weather changes. Still, even the park ranger was taken aback by how fast the fog covered them.

Although they continued driving, Kathy recalls they both began to act strangely. At one point, "We were like automatons. We simultaneously slowly turned our heads toward the front passenger window to see a huge circular object that lit up the fog outside in a burnt-red glow. The glow made a large, circular puddle of light below it."

Like robots, they simultaneously turned their heads back to the front and looked out the windshield as they proceeded down the highway. Neither said a word about the anomaly they had just witnessed.

Once they got to Tom's place, the couple continued not to speak about what they had seen but did agree that they were exhausted and needed to sleep. This was unusual for Kathy because she liked to stay up late. As it turned out, she didn't sleep anyway, though Tom drifted off quickly.

As she lay there, Tom's dog began to bark and continued to do so erratically and frantically. She didn't get up to check on the dog, nor did she wake up Tom—though she felt someone was outside.

In the morning, Tom was getting ready for work, and Kathy was looking for something. He asked what she was doing.

"I'm looking for evidence."

"Evidence? Of what?"

She looked at him. "I know they were here … I know they were here."

After a moment, Tom said, "I had a dream." She looked at him.

"I was out of my body … above the bed and looking down … watching you. I was so scared. I tried to wake you up. I was screaming and screaming and screaming, but you wouldn't wake up."

Kathy said he stopped talking then, and he didn't want to continue.

She had a strange feeling that something had changed; something was very different. It wasn't just what they had seen in the fog, that strange

burnt-red object, but something was … different now. She went into the bedroom and pulled back the sheets to make the bed.

Blood.

It was on his side of the bed, about hip level.

They both checked him over, but they didn't find anything, no wound, no blood. Then they discovered a scrape on Kathy's hip, her left one. There were tiny bits of dried blood in it.

Les Velez says Kathy and Tom had similar memories of what had occurred on a conscious level. Sometime later, though, Kathy was hypnotized and taken back to that foggy evening. Les says, "The hypnosis had an added dimension that would subsequently shatter their relationship as it detailed what best can be described as an abduction."

Kathy's memory changed under hypnotic regression. She said after she and Tom had observed the UFO, they stopped a short distance down the road, turned onto a smaller dirt one, and headed back to see if they could get closer to the object. To their dismay, it was gone.

The drive home from where they saw the object typically took five minutes, but when they pulled into Tom's driveway, it was four and a half hours later. They had left the site of the object around 5:00 p.m. and arrived home at 9:30 p.m.

Consciously, the only thing she remembered about her sleepless night was the dog's frantic barking. But under hypnosis, her recall had astonishing added elements.

She recalled giving up on sleep and lying helpless in the dark next to Tom. Under hypnosis, she discovered that between 4 a.m. and when she got up later in the morning, she had an experience that would change her life.

She could see herself lying in bed with her arms crossed over her chest. A sense of dread and fear filled her mind and body. About what, she didn't know.

Until she saw *them* coming through the bedroom wall.

Kathy says, "I saw them pass through it as you would step over something, like a log." She couldn't relate to what she saw as she had never experienced anything like it in her life. "I had never heard of such a thing. I had never seen this before or read anything about it. They were just stepping right through the wall as if it were made of air.

"There were about five of the brownish ones and two of the grey ones. One of the brown ones met my eyes as it came through the wall. I

remember thinking, ‘What are you doing here?’ It was a quick communication, but I knew the being felt surprised and embarrassed.

“People say they all look the same, but they weren’t. There was a difference. If you were to draw them on paper, they would look the same. But they weren’t.

“I saw two greys, just part of their face, and their eyes scared me. They were black and very deep. It was like you couldn’t see them, but they could see into you. They know you.”

Kathy says the greys seemed to be wearing something that looked like painters’ overalls.

The brown beings weren’t wearing any clothing and appeared to be covered with soft, brown hair. “The being went over to my boyfriend, who was kind of hiding. He was really scared and lying in a fetal position.”

Then they began to float Tom.

“His back was to the ceiling,” Kathy says. “I remember his eyes were just wide open in terror. He couldn’t move, and he was screaming, but not audibly. [It was like] his soul was screaming. That is the only way I can describe it.”

Tom’s dog that had been barking frantically throughout the night was strangely silent during the encounter.

Kathy then saw Tom moving through the wall of their bedroom, accompanied by the two greys. She was paralyzed with fear, unable to speak or move.

The next thing she remembered was waking up in the morning, her mind blank. “It’s the only way I can describe the strange feeling,” she says. “I had no thoughts and no emotions.”

More On MUFON

I had an opportunity to interview Keith Rowell of Oregon MUFON, who had been investigating UFOs since the 1980s, both independently and as part of MUFON. I asked him how he deals with mentally ill witnesses. I told him that I had worked in law enforcement for 29 years and that sometimes a person’s mental instability is immediately apparent. Other times, it doesn’t become evident right away.

Keith said, “In my years of working with UFO percipients, I’ve only encountered perhaps five people who seemed to me (as a rank amateur with

no special training in psychology) to not have a good grip on reality. The very large majority of people have always seemed to me to handle the usual concepts of what is real and what is not reasonably well up to the level of their formal education.

"However, pilots, for example, or technical people, in general, do much better with knowing directions, weather conditions, size relationships, etc. Regular folks have a less nuanced understanding of the world around them, as science understands the world, of course. We work with this as best we can."

I asked Keith if some people report encounters with UFOs—sightings and abduction—to get attention. His answer was straight to the point. "In Oregon MUFON's experience, virtually never."

As a law enforcement professional who had people lie to him constantly for nearly three decades, I was surprised by his answer to my next question. I asked him about hoaxers, people who make false reports for any number of reasons.

Keith said, "As a field investigator, I handled a total of less than five hoaxes in my career with MUFON. A couple [of cases] I remember were standard doctored UFO photos and a doctored video. I proceeded by telling the [hoaxers] that I believed their products were not of real UFOs. Then I invited them to work with me if they believed their evidence was real. Hoaxers don't respond when approached this way."

I was curious about how traumatized people are by their abduction experience.

He said, "'Traumatized' is too strong a word for the people we see. But we do see occasional close encounters and abductee/deep experiencer people [who] are not extremely upset on an ongoing basis. Their disturbance is more akin to a low-grade 'something is not right in my life' sort of feeling. We try to steer these people to the very few professional counselors and psychotherapists in Oregon/Washington who acknowledge the UFO phenomenon as some sort of reality."

To be clear, people who believe they have been abducted are not sent to counselors and psychotherapists because MUFON thinks they are mentally ill. They are sent to hand-picked counselors who recognize that abduction is real, and they want to help those experiencers troubled by what happened.

What does all this mean?

The connection between shadow people, aliens, and abduction remains fuzzy. There are people convinced that aliens and shadow entities are one and the same. Of course, believing it does not make it a fact. Abduction by aliens is a novel concept, and visitations by shadow people when you're sawing Z's is too. But that doesn't automatically mean they are connected.

And it doesn't mean they aren't.

Scientists want to test these events in a lab, but at present, there isn't a way to do that.

But there might be hope on the horizon.

First, more and more people are reporting shadow people sightings, both in their bedroom and outside of it. Does this mean there is an increase in the phenomenon? Or, as we said earlier, are more people reporting as a result of a proliferation of websites and social media pages devoted to the topic? Who knows?

Not knowing the reason isn't terribly important. What is significant is that more people are looking at the issue, and more minds might devise a way to compile data, research it, find commonalities, and perhaps—*perhaps*—find a way to conjure shadow entities.

Second, it appears the United States government is taking a greater interest in the UFO phenomenon. In the late spring of 2020, the Senate Intelligence Committee voted to require the Pentagon and U.S. Intelligence Committee to compile a public analysis of UFO reports collected by the military and intelligence communities. This occurred after an upsurge of recent reports of sightings by US Navy pilots and a 2019 briefing on UFOs presented to committee members.

The committee was also inspired by several high-profile articles in the prestigious *New York Times* newspaper and several other news outlets detailing encounters between UFOs and U.S. Navy fighter pilots.

This is significant because with the acknowledgment from prominent newspapers and the Senate Intelligence Committee's attention, it would seem logical that the scientific crowd would be inspired to look into the matter. With scientific minds onboard (albeit often stubborn minds), our knowledge of UFOs, aliens, and abduction will grow.

And maybe, just maybe, they will find a connection to shadow entities.

CHAPTER 8

LOCATIONS WITH A HISTORY OF PARANORMAL ACTIVITY

There are hundreds if not thousands of haunted places in the world. Are there some near you? Yes. Google "Haunted places near _____ (your location)," and you will find, x-number of places believed to be occupied by spirits, ghosts, shadow people, voices, screams, and other spooky things. Some of the larger cities offer ghost tours. While you might not experience anything paranormal on them, they are usually fun and historically educational.

I read a lot about haunted locations. One of my favorites is inside the walls of the Forbidden City in Beijing, China. The place consisted of 980 buildings on 180 acres and was fully functional from the 15th century through the early 20th. The rumor is that it's haunted by ghosts of concubines, women who lived with the emperor but with lower status than his wives.

In 1421, a few years before Columbus "discovered" America, Emperor Yongle ordered 3000 of his ladies in waiting, all of whom lived in the Forbidden City, to be killed because he thought one unknown concubine poisoned one of the others. Actually, he didn't kill all of them; he spared a few of his favorites. When the "benevolent" emperor died, 16 of his women were hung by nooses made of white silk.

Today, the Forbidden City is haunted by entities that reflect this terrible era. For example, people have seen a lady fleeing from a ghostly soldier; heard screaming, crying, and the clanking of swords in battle; and seen apparitions of dead bodies, blood pools, and pieces of floating white silk.

As I've noted in previous books on the paranormal, no one knows why one place is haunted, and another isn't. For example, why is that house where an elderly man passed away from natural causes haunted, but the one farther down the block where a family of six were slaughtered isn't?

It's all part of the mystery.

Consider the below stories in which there were multiple paranormal incidents in locations before shadow people sightings occurred.

My Prior House

I lived for 33 years in my last home. As any house where people live for years, it saw life, lots of it: growing kids, happy times, sad times, cats and dogs, grief, boredom, and exhilaration. Fortunately, no one died in the house when I occupied it, but I lost my parents during the years I lived there, and friends. I grieved within the walls of my home.

I was diagnosed with prostate cancer shortly before moving from the house, thanks to Agent Orange exposure in Vietnam. That was an emotional downer, but the doctors got it all out, an emotional upper. Many ups and downs in the place for over three decades.

Some people experienced in the paranormal say that a house well-lived in has a particular energy.

I don't recall experiencing supernatural events in the place during the first 15 years, but we did in the remaining. While the first few incidents don't involve shadow entities, they establish that the home was primed for the later ones that did.

"Loren."

It was a two-story house, and my office and weight training room occupied the second floor. One of the first times I experienced something was less than a week after my mother died. I can't remember if it was before or after the funeral. I was upstairs writing, the room silent. I was pounding the keys, my back to the room, when as clear as a summer day, I heard, *"Loren!"*

It was whispered, but with considerable force, making me quickly turn to look around the room. There was no one there, which I knew because the whisper was my mother's voice. It was the one she used when my father was watching television or when other people were talking, and she wanted my attention without interfering with them.

Well, she sure got it that day.

Rattling dishes

When I had my own family, and my parents would stop by for a Sunday visit, my mother always got up quickly to wash the dessert dishes.

Sometimes I wouldn't be aware that she had left the living room until I heard the plates and utensils being placed in the dish drainer out in the kitchen. In addition to the sound of stacking them, they clattered a little more as they settled against one another.

A week or so after I heard my mother whisper my name, I was in the living room, alone in the house when I heard the dishes. Always, by the time I left the kitchen after a meal, the washed dishes had completed their settling, and all was quiet. This was the first time I heard that familiar sound well after I had left the room. I never heard it before that night, nor after.

Activity that happens between the hours of evening and morning adds a creepy element to things. If I had heard my mother whisper my name at 2 a.m., I would have likely had an entirely different response than when I heard it during the afternoon. The same is true of the sound of the dishes. Those are sounds you don't want to wake you up in the middle of the night.

Door opening on its own

Besides the two incidents related to my mother, there were other events. On one occasion, I was by the front door saying goodbye to a visitor when the coat closet door swung open. This had never happened before because the door had to be manually made to open and close. After the guest left, I tried all kinds of ways to duplicate the action, but the door didn't do it again.

Bahnishikha Das is credited with writing, "Some beautiful coincidences do not occur coincidentally."

Faucet

One evening, I went out to empty the garbage, and as I passed the outdoor faucet, it burst on full force, spraying water all over the driveway. It would have been strange enough if it had trickled on. But it was alarming to pass by, and have it blast on, a force requiring four twists of the wrist. This was the only time I experienced this in the decades I lived there.

Sofa

On multiple occasions, visitors told me they felt someone sit down on the sofa next to them when they were alone in the living room. I don't recall if these people actually saw the cushions sink in, but they felt a sensation that one would typically experience when someone sat closely.

Birds

One day I was home alone sitting on the living room sofa and looking out a large plate window that faced east. I was miles away in thought when a robin swooped down from the sky and slammed full speed into the glass. When I went outside to check on the bird, it struggled to its feet and flew off.

I made coffee, hoping my heart rate would slow, and then headed to my office down the hall. I sat down and commenced typing when another bird slammed into the room's north-facing window. That one didn't survive.

There are all kinds of superstitions about a bird hitting your window:

You're going to face an obstacle.
One door in your life is going to close, and another will open.
You're about to end a relationship: with a person, a job, etc.
An angel wants you to take notice.
The day it happens could be an anniversary.
A loved one is going to die.

Within 20 minutes, two birds hit two of my windows that faced different directions. Since none of the superstitions happened, maybe the second bird canceled out the first bird's message.

To my mind, these events and others that occurred in the house, established my home as having a history of paranormal activity. What follows involved shadow-like entities and others types.

My Experience in the Bedroom

My experiences were different than my wife's. Mine focused around the door that led from the bedroom out into the hallway. Another led from the bedroom to the bathroom, but we kept it closed, so I didn't see entities there. But the one to the hall got crowded at times.

I don't remember when I first saw them around the doorway, though I would guess it was about the 20th year or so that I lived there.

To keep the heat and sun off the bedroom windows, we covered them with blackout shades making the room quite dark. There were no windows in the hallway, though there was a little light leakage from the bathroom where we had a nightlight with a small lightbulb plugged into a wall outlet.

The seepage provided just enough elimination to see the far wall of the hallway from the bed, though dimly.

The entities were more of a human shape than anything else, and they moved. They were wispy, as opposed to solid as people so often describe shadow figures. And some shimmied as if viewing a mountain range across a long expanse of a scorching desert. There were two, sometimes three beings, but only one had a little color, a vague haze of shimmying red.

The ones without color were dark, or maybe completely black. Somehow, though, I could see them in the doorway between the lightless bedroom and the ever so barely lit hallway. I don't recall ever seeing one of them traverse all the way from the left side of the doorway to the right side. Instead, they would move about halfway across and then return to the left side, where they clung to the doorframe or disappeared.

The entity with color did the same, but at times it would "hide" behind the door frame and peek around the edge. Its body mostly hidden by the wall, it would lean away from the frame, revealing a head too large for its body. In my mind, it was looking at me. After two or three seconds, it moved back behind the left frame, leaving exposed only a little of its great head. Then it would lean out again, always with the quiver. My sense was it was playing a sort of paranormal peek-a-boo.

Sometimes it was unnerving and goosebump producing, but other times I just watched it with curiosity. I was never concerned that they would leave the doorway and float over the bed. Why? I don't know; I just somehow knew (of just hoped) they would remain in the doorway. Maybe the door was as far as their comfort zone went. If so, I'm most thankful for that.

I almost always saw the entities before I slept and sometimes when I awoke to use the hall bathroom. Sometimes when I passed through the doorway in the middle of the night, my body erupted in goosebumps. Was it just a psyche-out because I had seen the things shimming about earlier in the evening? Or, did I in my droopy-eyed, sleep-fogged mind, not see them there, as I rudely stumbled through their wispy forms, and the goosebumps were their way of reminding me of their presence?

That's one of those questions you could speculate to death but never know for sure.

I haven't seen anything like that in the new house, at least not in the doorway. Sometimes when I get up to use the bedroom bathroom, I'll look out the door down a long hallway that leads past a set of stairs. We have

exterior lighting, and when it's windy, the bushes move around in front of the ground lights. That can make for some spooky dancing light and shadows in the hall. One night I glanced down the hall and saw something low and moving fast toward me. Just as my heart slammed into my throat, I saw a tail and realized that Pearl, our terrier dog, was coming back from getting a drink in the kitchen.

Thanks for nipping a couple of years off my lifeline, Pearl.

So what were those things I repeatedly saw for several years in the other house? Were they tricks of the light? How could a tiny nightlight create a scenario in which human-like images moved about without structure or duplicate repetition?

Nightmares? No, because I wasn't sleeping when I saw them. What about the goosebumps I experienced when passing through the doorway at night? Debunkers would say it was my imagination. Maybe. The mind can create all kinds of head trips. But I never experienced goosebumps anywhere else in the large house, only in that bedroom doorway and only occasionally. And only at night.

My wife had her own experiences in the room.

My Wife's Experience in the Bedroom

The room was dark as always, made more so by our blackout shades, but there was the aforementioned faint glow coming from the hall bathroom nightlight.

"I was already awake when you got up one night to get a glass of water," Lisa said. "I saw you move down the side of the bed, walk along the end of it, and out the hall door. A few minutes later, you came back through the door and walked along the end of the bed. But I didn't see you move around the corner and move along your side to get in. Nor did I feel the mattress sink in as it always did when you returned. Just when I was wondering what happened, a second dark figure came through the bedroom door.

"I recognized the silhouette and the walk. This one was you too.

"You walked along the bottom of the bed, rounded the corner, and moved up the side where you sat down and got under the covers.

"It was very creepy. I'm happy that was the only time it happened."

Lisa lived in two other houses in the six years before I met her. In both of them, she witnessed balls of light where she slept, all but one time they

were about six inches in diameter, partly translucent and partly solid. The one time they were larger, she saw two of them, the size of standard basketballs. They were generally reddish; a couple of times, they were greenish.

In the first house, she saw them on three occasions, always at night after waking up. She doesn't recall being unable to move; instead, she found herself fascinated with the sighting. The globe was about eight feet away, a foot down from the ceiling and a foot away from the wall. It appeared to rotate as it hovered for five minutes, without sound, without changing its appearance. Her sense of it was that it was observing her as she slept and after she awoke.

When the five minutes or so were up, it passed through the wall and was gone.

This occurred three times within a year.

One night in her second house, she had fallen asleep for a few minutes on her sofa. When she awoke, she looked toward her dining room to see a red, baseball-sized orb just below her ceiling, silently rotating. As before, she had a strange but powerful sense that it was watching her. It looked the same as the orbs she witnessed at her other house. It might be significant to note that the two houses were only two blocks apart, and Lisa was still in weekly contact with the people in the first one.

The one she saw while lying on her sofa hovered for several minutes. There were no ambient lights anywhere in the house or outside. She tested its authenticity by closing her eyes and opening them. It was still there. She turned her head away and looked back.

Still there, hovering and rotating. Then, as it did at her other house, it disappeared back into the wall.

This occurred at least two times that she remembers for sure at her second residence.

A few years later, and after we were married and living in the house that I occupied for over three decades, she experienced another orb sighting. This one was considerably different from the others. She was wide awake when she first saw them, two orbs, both as large as basketballs, one red, the other green.

She saw them emerge, not through the open hall door that had been the venue of so many of my sightings, but rather through the closed door.

She saw them glide in, about a foot or two below the ceiling. They moved together, maintaining a consistent distance apart as they advanced toward the foot of the bed on my side. They hovered for a few minutes, and then glided back through the bedroom door and were gone.

Again, her feeling was they were observing us. She didn't feel fear, though her senses felt heightened.

When asked if she thought they would be visible during the day, she said she didn't think so.

Kami Miller

[Kami is a popular writer of several top-selling books]

I think there's something about being a pre-teen that amplifies whatever is around. I think it's also a time when the brain is growing as fast as the body and is under the influence of powerful hormones. I know that my pre-teens and early teens were full of terrifying events that still haunt me to this day. Thankfully as I got older, not only did these things happen much less often, but I had more context. Also, I think being at least a little familiar helps ease some of the fear. But not all. Goodness, not all.

I grew up in a haunted house. It wasn't old. It was a new build. I have no idea why it was haunted. As far as I know, there wasn't any archeology to suggest that people previously living there might be lingering for some reason, or that spirits were offended somehow. And yet it was indisputably haunted. It makes me wonder if a haunting has anything to do with dead people at all…and yet it sounded like a person.

I remember one discussion in particular where my mother, sister, and I were finishing each other's sentences as we described the latest incident where we could clearly hear someone walking up and down the stairs, up and down a short hall, into the kitchen…

The reason I mention this is because I wasn't a stranger to things paranormal. Quite the opposite. I guess that's why my experiences with sleep paralysis stand out so much. There is something especially horrifying about not being able to move while seeing and experiencing things that intensely. The feeling of complete helplessness is part of the reason why these incidents were so terrifying.

I realize it might be as simple as brain chemistry gone awry. I majored in Engineering and Physics in college, and I like proof and repeatable

experiments. The idea that it's all in our heads is a reasonable assumption.

And yet I can't dismiss my experiences as mere brain chemistry. Unless you've experienced it yourself, it's hard to describe how radically different these things are from dreams or being drunk or experiencing hallucinations from exhaustion, all of which have happened to me often enough that there's no way for me to confuse one with the other. It feels more like haunting incidents. It feels like you've got one foot on each side of a line that divides two worlds when it happens to you. Because you are, completely and undisputedly, present in the familiar while the inexplicable happens.

I had solid evidence that I wasn't the only one in the house who heard strange noises and saw strange things. Often, we'd hear the sounds at the same time from different parts of the house. When you have corroboration for some things, it's harder to dismiss the others as hallucinations. That's my bias.

I always warn people that it's okay to laugh when I tell them the following story, and I won't be offended because it doesn't sound frightening at all, I'm sure. In fact, it sounds absurd. But to me, it was one of the most terrifying experiences of my life.

I woke up from a dreamless sleep. I'm not entirely sure that I'd actually fallen completely asleep in the first place, as it wasn't particularly late. The house was quiet, though. My closet was to the left of the door, creating a little mini entryway into my room. The door was open—it opened toward the wall between my sister's room and mine—and behind it was a shadow.

There was a faint light coming from the hall cast by the smoke alarm just outside our doors. And it struck me immediately that the shadow behind my door was wrong in relation to that light. The shadow went beyond the door's edge in an unnatural way, like it was solid, and it didn't have a straight, hard edge to match the door's outline. And it was much, much too dark, deeper than black, thicker than air. I stared at it, trying to make sense of it. I was afraid to move until I was sure I could dismiss what I was looking at as an optical illusion.

It wasn't until I decided to turn my head a tiny bit to try to get a slightly different perspective that I realized I *couldn't* move.

It was precisely that moment when the shadow moved. It unfurled from behind the door, and it spread what I can only describe as wings. It had a long, arched neck like a goose, but no beak, and it had red eyes.

God, I wanted to scream. I tried. I couldn't. It was coming toward me, and there was nothing I could do.

I blacked out. It was too much for my mind to comprehend, I think, and my heart was pounding so hard, and I couldn't breathe naturally. Maybe I fainted. But it also could have been that I'd been asleep the whole time and then woke up 'for real'.

Maybe.

But it also may be that something happened that night that I can't, won't remember, that I deliberately blocked out of my mind.

Regardless, the transition from that thing being there, and the thing being gone…I can't remember it.

One thing I will never doubt is the absolute knowledge that I was in my room, and I felt completely awake. It felt absolutely nothing like a dream. I could feel my pajamas and sheets on my skin, the weight on my blanket. I felt every nerve come alive. I saw as clearly as I usually saw in my room at night by the glow from the hall and from the orange light of my old-school 'digital' clock with the numbers that flipped down from a hinge in the middle of each number.

A big black goose with red eyes. Ridiculous.

And yet, to this day, though many aspects of that time of my life have become fuzzy over the years, I remember the initial shape of that shadow, and the spreading wings as it emerged, vividly. I remember the quality of the faint light in the hall, much fainter than even the smallest night light, and the light of my clock on my nightstand.

I remember being frozen. I remember not being able to scream for my sister or parents. I was smothering to death inside my own body, helpless while this thing came for me.

I remember how big it was…

…so big that it couldn't have possibly fit behind that door…

…the wings nearly brushing the ceiling…

…the eyes maybe five feet off the ground.

Christine Marie

My parents and younger sisters moved into a newly built home. They had all been living there for a few months when my sister saw the closet door in her room slide open on its own, and a dark figure with red eyes appear. At this point, she had never heard of a shadow person, let alone one with red

eyes. She was so terrified that my mom wrote a Catholic poem on the wall next to the closet door.

The writing on the wall reads: “O my Jesus forgive us our sins. Save us from the fire of Hell. Take all souls to Heaven, help especially those most in need of your mercy.”

On another occasion, my sister saw a boy, just a normal human boy, with blood on his head. This occurred in a downstairs hallway. There is a private airport very close to where my parents built their home. There have been many accidents at this location, including fatal ones.

Sometime later, my parents and sisters left the country for two weeks. When they returned, they found disheveled bedsheets on the guest bed, and toys that had been put in the room’s closet before they left, now arranged in a circular formation on the bed. Additionally, a Lego tower my sisters had built, had been completed dismantled and scattered all about the room.

One early morning, my mom woke up feeling someone playing with her leg. She thought it was my sisters teasing her, but when she got up, she found them sleeping in their beds. When she returned to hers, she felt a sensation like a finger vigorously poking her thigh. This freaked her out, and she woke up my dad. They both looked around but didn’t see anything.

A moment later, they heard something smack the loft window. My parents could see the window blinds swaying back and forth, but the AC wasn’t on, the floor vents were not being used, and the window was closed.

The blinds continued to wave as my frightened parents watched.

A few weeks later, it was Christmas, and my husband, our son, and I spent the night in the new house. During the night, my husband went to check on our car as there had been break-ins in the neighborhood. When he returned to the bedroom, he saw a dark shadow figure—at least six feet three, full-body and head— standing in the corner of the room as if watching us sleep. The shadow moved in front of the window, blocking the moonlight and creating a silhouette. It stopped in the other corner of the room, then quickly darted towards my husband, and went out the door.

On another occasion, my mom and sisters saw a shadow figure that looked the same as my husband had seen—over six feet tall with a head and shoulders.

There were other paranormal occurrences: doors slamming, family members awakened to the lights turning on and off, and a floor piano (the kind where people dance on the keys) played in front of us. But it was as if something was just walking across the keys without making a recognizable tune.

And everyone had a sense of being watched all the time.

Since my parents moved out of the house, they haven't experienced anything paranormal. I went back to speak to the new owners, their college-aged daughter, who said they hadn't experienced anything, at least up to that point.

I did a little research on the isolated land, and it doesn't appear that anything was built on it before my parent's home. However, I found out that a Native American Patwin tribe had inhabited the area. Patwin, also known as Patween and Southern Wintu, had once been native inhabitants of Northern California since 500 AD. A former sheriff said that there are Indian burial grounds in the area, and possibly the house was built near one.

Or *on* one.

Jess Burlingham

When I was 10, my family lived in an old farmhouse in the northern part of Ohio. We all knew the place was haunted because we often heard someone walking in the attic. This was also my first time seeing a ghost. A beautiful woman wearing a white flowing dress stood in the hallway upstairs outside our bedrooms on multiple occasions. She wasn't scary; she was actually calming.

I would just stare at her until she was gone in the blink of an eye.

One night a sound woke me. I didn't know what it was or its source, but a more immediate concern was my awareness that there was a negative presence in the room. Just as I was trying to understand that, I felt a weight on me. I was flat on my back with my arms to my side. The weight felt like it was on me as if it were my silhouette.

Adding to my terror, I didn't know if it was another person or…a being of some kind. Whatever it was, it was lying on top of me, all of me, and it wasn't moving.

I couldn't move.

I couldn't yell. I couldn't do anything.

Seconds passed, and then I could push against it. I strained harder and harder, and suddenly, the weight lifted off me, and my arms and legs thrust upward as if I were still shoving against the invisible force.

I lay there, out of breath and shivering with fear.

I never experienced it again.

Kent

For a while, I lived with my brother in a four-story house built in the late 1800s, which meant the place had seen a lot of people pass through, giving it a lot of history.

We often heard door-slamming, people talking, and footsteps coming up one of the many stairs. It was a spooky place, but my brother never said much about it.

One night I awoke to see a shadow person—I had never heard of such a thing before this—at the side of my bed. It was huge. How tall I couldn't tell, but if I were to guess, I'd say well over six feet. It seemed to be just watching me, which was creepy and scary.

When it saw me, it was like, *poof,* and it was gone.

My brother wouldn't say if he had ever seen anything like it. But it was a really eerie house.

Graveyards

Graveyards are controversial among paranormal investigators, arguing that a spirit would never hang around a place where they are buried. "Why would they?" the skeptics ask. "Why be at a place where their body is

decomposing? Wouldn't it be better to hang out somewhere where they were happy?

That is a good argument, but on the flip side, many investigators contend that spirits are often confused. For example, if they don't know they are dead, they may be baffled and shocked by seeing their grave marker.

Clairvoyants—and there are many with outstanding accuracy—say they have seen shadow figures in graveyards and recorded EVPs, electronic voice phenomenon.

One paranormal investigator and her team often check out cemeteries at the owner's request or the request of grounds people who complain of paranormal activity. The team leader said he prefers the older sections because they find the most action by shadow people. They have never been harmed, so they just stand back and watch the entities move about.

As we have discussed throughout this book, shadow people have been labeled as figments of the witness's imagination, people from another dimension, aliens, and so on. But since they are seen in graveyards, does that imply that they might be a spirit? Or worse, a demon?

Sightings of shadow people in graveyards are common.

New York: A Cemetery Near the Canadian Border

[This excerpt is taken in part from *Cops' True Stories of the Paranormal*.]

One day a couple was walking their dog near a grave that is believed by ghost hunters to be haunted. As they passed it, they both heard someone

behind them hiss, “Turn around!” They didn’t. Instead, they fled from the cemetery, no doubt changing their dog-walking route.

There are numerous reports of electronic interference in the area to include police radios in passing police cars.

Shadow people have been seen in the graveyard. A local ghost hunting group and police officers all report seeing dark figures darting about among the graves in the early morning hours.

Some ghost hunters believe shadow people draw on the energy from streetlamps in the area.

Or perhaps from the living.

CHAPTER 9

LAST THOUGHTS ON FEAR

Monsters don't sleep under your bed.
They sleep inside your head ~ unknown

Fear is often defined as an emotional response provoked by a perceived threat—a threat to you, a threat to a loved one, or sudden bad news, such as the kind you get from your doctor. This response can incite a change in your brain, other organs, and your behavior. The perceived threat releases chemicals that increase your heart rate, breathing, and charges your muscles with adrenaline.

Here are a few more symptoms:

- Your blood pressure increases.
- Your pupils dilate to take in as much light as possible.
- The veins in your skin constrict to send more blood to your major muscle groups. With less blood in your skin, you're likely to experience a chill.
- Your blood-glucose level increases.
- Your muscles tense energized by adrenaline and glucose. This includes the tiny muscles attached to each hair on the surface of your skin. Fine hairs are forced upright, pulling your skin with them, giving you goosebumps.
- Your smooth muscle relaxes so you can get more oxygen into your lungs
- Your nonessential systems—your digestion and immune system —shut down to allow more energy to deal with the threat.
- You have trouble focusing on small tasks because your brain is zeroed in on the primary threat.
- Your fine-motor skills fail, making routine tasks, such as inserting a key into a lock and accurately poking 9-1-1 on your

cell, difficult, if not impossible.

All of these things make you react in one of the three Fs: flight (run away), freeze (unable to move), or fight (fight like a mama bear.) By the way, you're not the only one to experience the three F's. So does every other living creature.

Free tip: An inability to poke 9-1-1 is common under the influence of a frightening event. When your usual 65-beat-per-minutes heart rate suddenly jumps to over 200 per minute, which can happen in an instant when suddenly startled, your ability to perform fine-motor skills fly out the window.

It would behoove you, therefore, to practice calling 9-1-1 on your cell or desk phone. Silly? Not at all. Many people have reported that doing so helped them respond smoothly when frightened.

Fear Is Important

Without fear, you'd jump down an elevator shaft just for the fun of it, and you'd poke a wall socket with a knife to get a charge. With fear, you don't do these things, nor do you walk into the middle of a street gang, run into a burning house, stroll across a freeway at rush hour, and walk on the wing of a plane. You don't do them out of fear and because they would be dumb things to do, anyway.

Fear helps you survive to see another day. Indeed, it has helped mankind survive throughout human history.

Anticipating Fear

Anticipating fear is often more intense than the event in question. Understanding the potential of something happening and knowing how to function in it can be helpful.

For example, as a military policeman in Saigon, I was often fearful whenever I was about to charge into a large bar fight. I was anxious when racing through the crowded streets to get to a bombing. And I was always shaky when anticipating that the Vietcong would attack that night. Early on, my anticipation of such dangerous events was intense—heart palpitating,

jaw quivering, eye-watering, and so on. But eventually, I understood what might happen, and I was able to function as I had been trained.

The same is true when I was a city cop in Portland, Oregon, where I faced an enormous variety of violent occurrences for 25 years. As a rookie, my anxiety was palpable, but in time, I learned that it was often more intense than the event itself. But even when it matched my apprehension, I knew through experience and confidence in my training that I could function in it.

Too much anxiety and apprehension, often called chronic fear, can interrupt your life, harm relationships, cause health issues, and dramatically affect the quality of your life and the lives of those close to you.

Anticipating that there is something in your basement where you just heard a strange sound can cause a host of mental and physical reactions.

Likewise, anticipating that tonight when you go to bed, you might see the shadow man again, can jack up your heart rate to over 200 beats per minute. It can make you hypervigilant and push your imagination to a place where every sight and sound is something paranormal.

Some people who frequently experience shadow entities say they have come to terms with it. They have found that the shadow appears and disappears with no harm done. (As mentioned elsewhere, there are no known cases of people being hurt by shadow beings.) Some of those people who have frequent sightings say they actually like seeing their shadow man. Recently, a man wrote on one of the shadow people sites that he misses sleep paralysis when he hasn't had it in a while.

Yeah, I think that's weird too.

Information can help. Knowledge is power. Knowing that your heart might race, and your breathing will likely become shallow, usually reduces the effect. Usually.

Here are a few things you can try to help you understand your anxiety and fear and a few techniques to reduce your apprehension.

Tips for dealing with anxiety and fear

- Learn all you can about sleep paralysis and shadow entities, mainly how the two often occur together.
- Learn how to reduce sleep paralysis from happening, including consulting a physician who specializes in it.

- Talk about your fear with someone who won't mock you or blow off your concern as insignificant. Talking it out is a powerful way to get feedback from a trusted person and also force you to think more deeply about the issue so you can articulate clearly.
- Exercise. According to the Mayo Clinic, physical exercise helps increase your brain's feel-good neurotransmitters, your endorphins. Runners call this a "runners high," but you can also get it from swimming, aerobic dancing, and shadowboxing. Exercise also increases your self-confidence, helps you relax, and reduces the symptoms of anxiety. If you're new to working out, start out with something gentle. If you're a veteran, kick it up a notch.
- Write about it. You don't have to send your writing to anyone; it can be just for you. To write, you have to organize your thoughts, so they are coherent on paper, a computer screen, or a Starbucks napkin. The more you write about it, even if you say the same thing over and over, the more your brain is comfortable with the subject and the less it intimidates you.
- If you're a religious person, pray. Many experiencers of sleep paralysis and sightings of shadow entities say they prayed for help and courage as the event was happening. Some say the threat disappeared.
- If spooky movies bother you, don't watch them, especially before bedtime.
- Talk to others who have experienced what you have. But as I often advise in this text, be careful about the advice given by Internet experts.
- Practice good sleep hygiene: eliminate blue light 2-3 hours before bedtime. This includes phones, TV, computers, and pads. Blue light interferes with your body's ability to prepare for sleep, and it blocks the helpful hormone called melatonin. Some phones, Apple and Android, for example, have display options that block blue light. It can be adjusted for specific hours during the night.
- Avoid alcohol and caffeine four hours before bedtime.

If these things aren't helpful, you should seek professional help. Sometimes it takes one or two visits to understand the nature of your fear and how to eliminate it.

Feeling unsafe where you live can cause your imagination to surge. Try some of the following.

- Make sure your doors and windows are secure at night. When your place is locked down, you'll recognize those nighttime creaks as settling noise, and your imagination is less likely to take flight.
- The windier the evening, the more likely your overgrown bushes and trees will scratch and tap on your bedroom windows. Trim them back.
- Consider a nightlight in your bedroom or leave a hall light or nightstand lamp on.
- Consider taking down anything you have hanging from the ceiling, such as a house plant, dreamcatcher, or model airplane. Your half-asleep imagination can get creative with these things at 2 a.m.
- Consider removing the coat rack from your bedroom. It can take on an ominous appearance in the shadowy hours of the night.
- Until your anxiety passes, consider removing or covering that big mirror on the wall. Hang a quilt over it.
- If you're easily affected by spooky movies, don't watch them before bedtime. A friend watches a lot of them before bedtime. Afterward, he and his wife spend a few minutes watching funny cat and dog videos on YouTube before going to bed.

The Power Of Affirmations

You might think this is new age nonsense, but it really does have power. Consider Henry Ford's old adage: "Whether you think you can or whether you think you can't, you're right." Studies show—*The Achievement Zone,* Shane Murphy, Berkley Trade, (1997)—negative imagery to be more powerful than positive. The good news is powerful positive imagery (thoughts) in time can overtake and replace the negative.

Remember the old days when everything was on tape? You taped a movie, watched it, and if you didn't want to keep it, you taped over it with something new. Think of all those negative things bouncing around in your head as being on tape, one programmed to repeat ad nauseam. Happily, they can be copied over with new and improved positive information.

I've taught techniques for copying over negative thoughts with positive ones for years to law enforcement, military, and martial arts communities with tremendous feedback.

Understand this: Positive affirmations are simple to do, with one significant caveat. You must use the right verbiage.

Let's say you're frightened about having another sleep paralysis and shadow man experience.

Don't say to yourself:

"I *won't* be scared tonight."
"I *won't* sleep poorly tonight."
"I *don't* believe in shadow man."
"A shadow man *won't* visit me tonight."
"I *will never* see shadow entities again in my sleep."
"I *won't* have sleep paralysis tonight."

When you use negative words, such as "don't," "won't," or "will not," your brain tends not to hear them. Instead, it understands the affirmation without the negative word. Such as, "I *will be* scared tonight." "A shadow man *will visit* me tonight." and, "I *will have* sleep paralysis tonight." This cements the negative thoughts into your mind. The good news is that it' an easy fix.

Change your verbiage to the positive.

Do say to yourself:

"I *will* be calm and relaxed tonight."
"I *will* sleep deeply and restfully tonight" (without referencing the shadow man).
"I am brave and in control of myself in the face of anything that happens."

"My bedroom is my sanctuary. I am safe there."
"I know sleep paralysis might last a few seconds or as long as two minutes."
"I will wait until it passes."

Repeat your positive statements as you prepare for bed, and as you drift off. Repeat them again when you first get up in the morning. Doodle them on a paper when you're sitting at your kitchen table. Write them on sticky notes, place them on your mirror, the wall across from your toilet, the dash of your car, and anywhere else that will reinforce your new, positive way of thinking. I know of a jet pilot who places them on the cockpit of his aircraft so he can repeat the positives at 40,000 feet.

These powerful affirmations are more than merely repeating phrases. You must think about each one. When you say, "I know sleep paralysis is a natural occurrence," back that up with knowledge about it. This book is a good start, as are others. When you have the power of knowledge, you have a weapon to combat thoughts of evil demons and other creatures of the dark.

Understand that the positive results won't happen overnight. After all, you might have been reinforcing negative thoughts for years, a lifetime in some cases. But happily, it won't take years to change. With constant practice, it can take effect in two weeks, maybe a week, or a month. But for sure you won't see a change if you don't do anything.

When There Is Evidence

Let's say there is no doubt in your mind that your sleep paralysis sighting is valid. Perhaps you have physical evidence to confirm what you saw, heard, or felt. Or other people witnessed what you saw.

Maybe you have had an experience outside of your home unrelated to sleeping. For example, you saw something while out hiking, walking home at night, or at work.

When this is the case, consider seeking legitimate paranormal investigators, psychics, and other people in the field. Many of them have experience dealing with entities that have targeted them in some fashion.

After my two experiences with sleep paralysis and dark entities, I contacted a paranormal investigator and two mediums I knew from past

writing projects. They all concurred that my experiences might have been a result of working on *Seekers of the Paranormal* and at the same time outlining this book, *Afraid to Sleep*. That is, writing, interviewing people, researching, and being preoccupied with the books.

They all suggested using sage.

I first learned this technique a few years ago and thought it was a goofy thing to do. My wife, however, believed in it. She used it at our old house after experiencing things going on (described in Chapter 8), and they stopped. She did it again after the recent recommendation following my experience, and so far (fingers crossed), the activity has ceased. Coincidence? Who knows?

Sage

Betty Miller leads Paranormal Investigators of New England (pi-ne.org). She is a strong proponent of sage and, in fact, insists her team take it with them on every investigation. She explains her process. “Using sage (or smudging) has its roots with indigenous cultures and takes on varying forms. The goal is to cleanse the area of negative energy and let only the good of ‘light and love’ remain. Typically, smudging combined with a handful of salt and a small container of oil (I use olive) is started at the bottom floor of the home, at each corner of the room, as you recite your personal statement for any negative energy to leave. I do it by dipping my finger in the oil and making a small cross on each corner of every window, mirror, and doorway. As each section of the room is completed, salt is poured across the doorways as it is crossed. This is done until the top floor is reached, and the negative entity ‘pushed’ out an open window.”

Betty Miller’s system has shown proven results. However, there are other methods on the Internet that might or might not work. Some might be considered extreme. Don’t just blindly follow a technique you find online, but instead, research it first.

Fear is a powerful force that can make your life miserable. This is especially true when you’re afraid in your home and in your bed when drifting off. It’s paramount for a healthy, productive life to learn all you can about fear, what frightens you, and then take steps to conquer it. It might be as easy as reading this text, finding good sources online, books on Amazon.com, talking with understanding friends, or talking to a therapist.

Life is too short to be subservient to anxiety, dread, and unease.

CONCLUSION

I've tried not to take sides on whether shadow entities are a real phenomenon, or something conjured in the human mind when awakening and falling asleep. Likewise, I've tried to remain neutral when considering anecdotal evidence of sightings by witnesses in structures other than the home—streets, forests, workplaces, and graveyards. While some explanations from the science community sound reasonable, one cannot ignore narratives by witnesses, many of whom had never heard of shadow entities before experiencing one. Additionally, many of their experiences don't fit neatly into the explanations offered by science and psychologists.

Some people (mostly debunkers) argue that we can't ignore science. Others say science doesn't address all the variables found in the shadow entity experience. They understand the science behind why we might see terrible things when experiencing sleep paralysis. But they ask why so many see shadow entities? Why don't experiencers see killer clowns, or rabid monkeys, or a salivating T-Rex?

As discussed in an early chapter, one scientist blamed the commonality of shadow people sightings on a 51-minute *Twilight Zone* episode titled "Shadow People," which appeared on television in 1961. I was a fan of the show in my early teens, but I don't remember seeing that episode. I watched it while working on this book, and it was pretty good.

But is it really possible the program might have psychologically influenced so many people? Who knows, though it doesn't sound feasible. Is it possible thousands of others didn't see it, and therefore couldn't have been affected yet they have seen shadow entities? Absolutely, and there are countless examples.

Science tells us that the brain paralyzes our body while we sleep, so we don't act out our dreams. (They still have unanswered questions about that, but that is the gist.) It certainly explains why people can't move, why they often feel like they are being held down by a tremendous weight on their chests. These symptoms have logical explanations that are part of sleep paralysis.

But do they explain every occurrence, every variable of the experience to include seeing shadow entities? No.

It certainly doesn't explain how and why people see shadow entities outside of the bedroom when they aren't sleeping. So far, science and psychologists haven't addressed this aspect of the shadow phenomenon at all.

There have been many explanations as to what the entities are, to include aliens, ghosts, people from another dimension, demons, omens, astral-projection, and more. Are these feasible? Sure. At this juncture, the subject is open to any consideration, even those some people might consider absurd.

What we know for sure at this writing is that people, lots of them, are experiencing shadow entities in all their multiple forms. Some are absolutely terrified to sleep and are crying out for help. Those who have seen shadow entities outside of the bedroom are frightened and terrified too. Some might argue that they are more afraid. They are asking: What are these things out here on this lonely highway? In this dense forest? In the corner of this old warehouse?

Paranormal investigators encounter shadow people all the time. Some have video evidence, and many have chilling anecdotes of what occurred during their investigations. This is valuable information to document and keep on file as we continue to look at the phenomenon.

Are sightings increasing as many people are claiming? It's difficult to say. Maybe it seems so because there is a proliferation of websites and social media pages devoted to shadow entity sightings where people can share their experiences.

Or maybe there really is an increase.

If there is, what does it mean? Again, it's difficult to say.

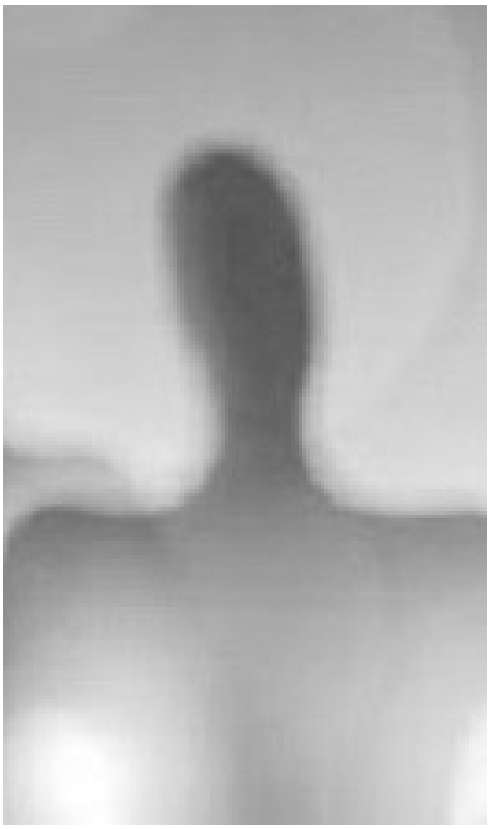
The UFO phenomenon and shadow entities share commonalities beyond the conjecture that shadow people might be aliens. I'm referring to acceptance. For example, UFOlogists have not so patiently waited for the media to report on sightings and encounters earnestly. UFOlogists believe science and money backers will take a serious look at what is going on only when the media gets involved and, ultimately, the government.

Happily, that is beginning to happen with new disclosures of incidents and encounters by our military, airline pilots, and others deemed notable by the press. (Yes, that is insulting to the rest of us common folk.) As a result,

news stories are now being reported without the mocking tone used in the past.

Could this happen with shadow entities too? If more people are indeed experiencing them, or it only seems that way because there are more places to report incidents, maybe, just maybe, a major news source will pick up on it.

Then maybe science and psychologists will take a harder look at what is happening.



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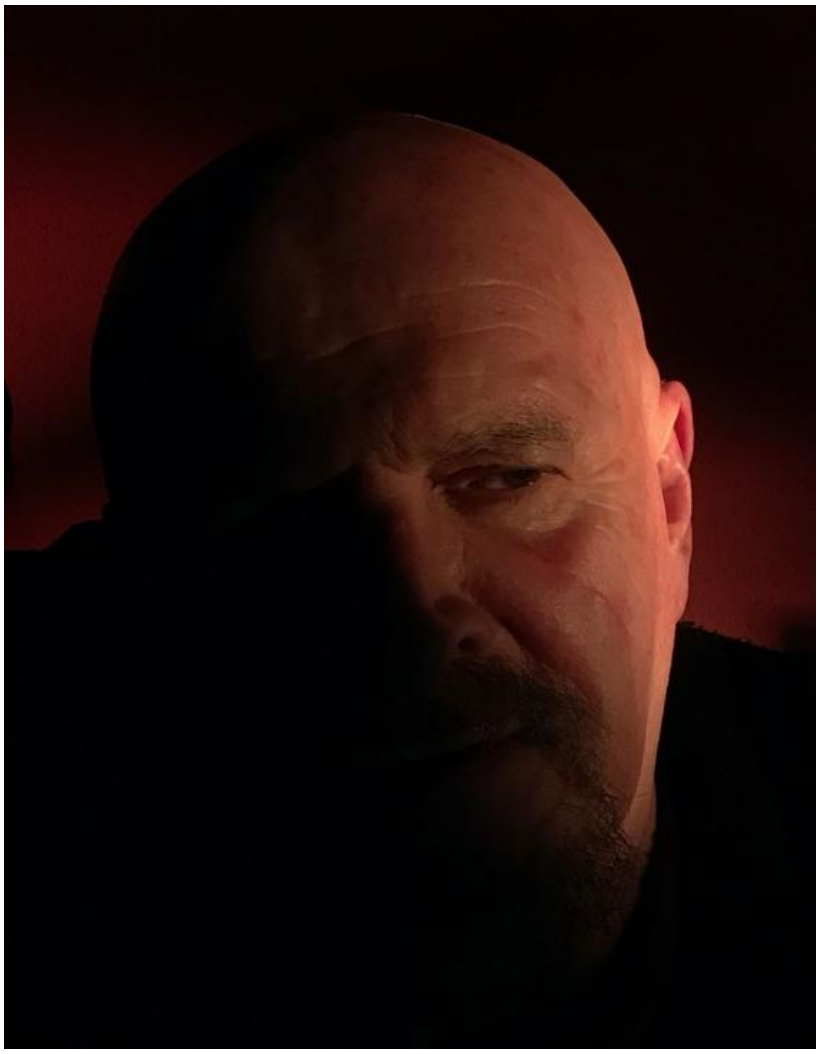
ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Loren W. Christensen has been involved in law enforcement since 1967. He began as a 21-year-old military policeman in the U.S. Army, serving stateside and as a patrolman in Saigon, Vietnam, during the war. At 26, he joined the Portland, Oregon Police Bureau working a variety of jobs to include street patrol, gang enforcement, intelligence, bodyguarding, and academy trainer, retiring after 25 years.

In 1997, Loren began a full-time career as a writer, now with nearly 60 books in print with seven publishers, and magazine articles and blog pieces.

He edited a police newspaper for seven years. His non-fiction includes books on martial arts, police work, PTSD, mental preparation for violence, meditation, nutrition, exercise, the paranormal, and various subcultures, including prostitution, street gangs, skid row, and the warrior community.

His four-book fiction series *Dukkha* was a finalist in the prestigious USA Best Book Awards. Two of his books have been printed in multiple languages, and two are in audiobook format.

As a martial arts student and teacher since 1965, Loren has earned a 1st-dan black belt in the Filipino fighting art of *arnis,* a 2nd-degree black belt in *aiki jujitsu* and, on October 23, 2018, the American Karate Black Belt Association in Texas, awarded him a 10th-dan black belt in karate. Loren was inducted into the Masters Hall of Fame in 2011.